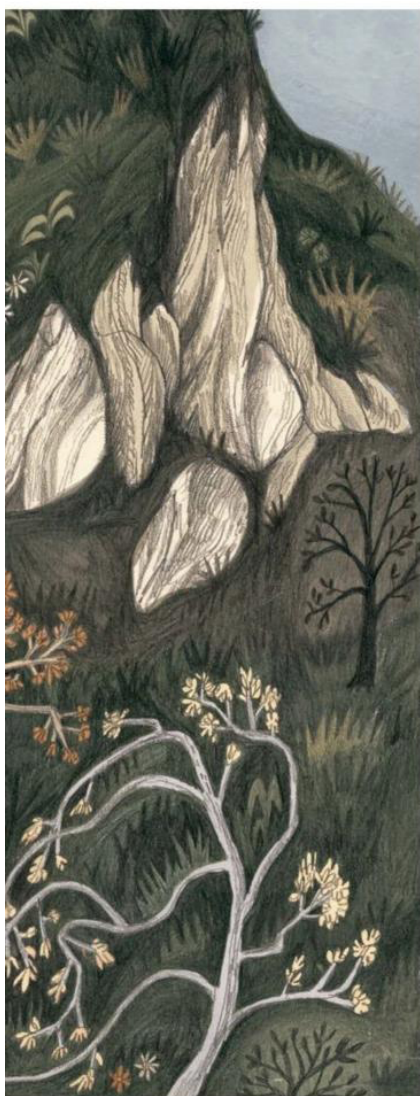THE ART OF

WolfWalkers

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOLOMON

FOREWORD BY JAMES BAXTER

AFTERWORD BY TOMM MOORE AND ROSS STEWART

THE ART OF

WolfWalkers

WRITTEN BY CHARLES SOLOMON

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Abrams, New York

A
REWARD
FOR THE KILLING OF A
WOLF

Is a bitche wolfe   Is a dog wolf

OF Kilkennye and Surrounds

Printed for Oliver Cromwell at the Bible in Dublinne. 1650

Foreword

So I'm sitting in Los Angeles, in 2009, watching *The Secret of Kells* and thinking, "Who on earth are these guys?"

I'm a British animator who has spent his career in the Hollywood system, and suddenly there's this independent film from Ireland that has the intelligent tone of Hayao Miyazaki, the artistic purity of Richard Williams, and the decorative flare of Celtic design (look at the pages of the *Book of Kells* in Trinity College, Dublin, and you will see the Celts' love of intricate pattern).

Animated films are a Herculean task to complete, even for a major Hollywood studio. "Wow," I thought. "How did *that* happen?" As it turns out, it happened just as you might expect: through incredible hard work and commitment, the marshaling of every available artistic resource, and an unremitting siege in terms of independent fundraising. What you might not expect is that the artists who did it remain lovely, generous, and passionate people as they continue to produce the most beautiful animation from the heart of the Irish countryside. Cartoon Saloon has become a beacon for independent animation, and a lesson in balancing art and commerce.

Over the next few years, I had the pleasure of meeting Tomm Moore when he would show up in Los Angeles for pitching and fundraising. I would later meet Paul Young and Nora Twomey, Tomm's art school friends who started Cartoon Saloon with him. "I absolutely adored *Song of the Sea*," I said to Tomm, trying not to sound insanely jealous that he had created such a beautiful work of art. "We're making a new one right now," he said. "It's about wolves." "That's going to be amazing," I thought. Animating dogs is one of my favorite things to do, but I've never had the chance to do one professionally. So I said, trying to sound casual, "Well, if there's anything I can do to help, please let me know," which is my way, with filmmakers whom I really admire, of begging them to please, please, *please* just let me animate a couple of shots

on their movies. Thankfully, Tomm took pity on me, and I did get to contribute exactly two shots for *WolfWalkers*.

WolfWalkers embodies so much of what is extraordinary about Cartoon Saloon. First, it's actually set in Kilkenny, the small medieval Irish town that the studio calls home. It's not a completely insane choice to start making an animated feature there, since it has a thriving arts culture, but it's not a major metropolitan area like Dublin, or London, or Los Angeles, with their infrastructure and talent pools.

I love visiting Kilkenny. Away from the machinery of Hollywood, you instantly understand why Cartoon Saloon's films speak with such a unique voice. Over a Guinness with Tomm in a hotel bar (an experience that I highly recommend), I marveled at how he was able to build a studio there: "You didn't go out to LA or something, like the rest of us with dreams of being in animation. You made the industry come to you, here." "I guess I just didn't think it was an option," he replied, "I just wanted to get started and not worry about it being perfect. I just wanted to do it." It's that spirit of independence, of just wanting to get going on your own artistic journey, no matter what obstacles you might encounter along the way, that sets Cartoon Saloon apart. Now, Kilkenny is a thriving animation hub, with two busy animation studios and its own animation festival. Not to mention a robust gourmet vegan scene, inspired by the Cartoon Saloon crowd.

Second, *WolfWalkers* is about integrity, being true to who you are—who you turn out to be—and celebrating the differences in all of us. Tomm and his friends at Cartoon Saloon have created a space where artistic integrity is paramount, where artists can bring to their projects what is unique about themselves, even as they all work toward a common goal. This integrity comes at a price, and that price is the necessity of fundraising. If you want to express yourself artistically as your primary goal, you're going to have to convince people to believe in you and give you your budget.

It is a never-ending struggle that you will not see in these pages. You will only see the spoils of that war, the beautiful artwork made by artists who, like wolves, are free to be themselves.

Last, *WolfWalkers* displays the artistic style that has become a hallmark of Cartoon Saloon's films, and what this book is dedicated to celebrating. Their design sense has a special alchemy to it, and it's the thing that first drew me to their work. It is a blend of many of the things that I have loved throughout my own journey into this art form. Their design, for instance, takes some cues from Richard Williams's masterpiece *The Thief and the Cobbler* in its use of flattened perspective, which was itself inspired by the art found in Persian miniatures. In *The Secret of Kells* and *Song of the Sea*, the characters might be walking along normally, as if viewed straight on, but you might see the ground as if viewed from above, like you were looking down on a map. The perspective of the ground is tilted and flattened toward the viewer. In *WolfWalkers*, some of this element remains, although this film plays more with perspective as it explores the wolves' experience of the world, navigating by smell through a three-dimensional space.

The character designs in *WolfWalkers* also have a special blend of the graphic and the volumetric. This is also an element that I love, having myself been inspired by the work of Disney animator Milt Kahl, along with designers like Tom Oreb. Watching *Sleeping Beauty* to me is like watching a master magician: The character shapes are symbolic, often flattened out and "cheated" in terms of real space. They have sharp corners and many straight lines, although when they move, they move in an organic and dimensional way, which gives the characters life despite their designed appearance. How are these obviously drawn images able to have more life than some real people whom I know? Cartoon Saloon's characters have taken this design philosophy to the next level, creating shapes that flow and crash into each other like Celtic knotwork, but always staying true to character. Who these characters are is always the most important consideration, but the special magic of animation is to experience these characters in a world that, because of its artifice, can free your imagination.

As more people come to enjoy the amazing work from this group of artists, the more Cartoon Saloon can flourish and continue to produce groundbreaking animated films. I hope you enjoy experiencing the beautiful art used in the creation of *WolfWalkers* as much as the artists enjoyed making it.

JAMES BAXTER, APRIL 2020

JAMES BAXTER *was born in 1967 in Bristol and raised in Bishop's Stortford, England. He started experimenting on little animation tests with an 8mm camera at age sixteen. James attended Cambridge College of Arts & Technology for one year and West Surrey College of Art and Design for another year before leaving to work on* Who Framed Roger Rabbit *in London. James moved to California to work for the Walt Disney Company, where he worked as the supervising animator on classic characters like Belle in* Beauty and the Beast *and Rafiki in* The Lion King. *He then moved to DreamWorks SKG, where he worked on* The Prince of Egypt, Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron, *and* Shrek 2. *From 2005 to 2008, James had his own studio, James Baxter Animation, which produced several projects including the hand-drawn animation for the Disney feature film* Enchanted *and the opening sequence of DreamWorks'* Kung Fu Panda. *He returned to DreamWorks Animation to work on* How to Train Your Dragon, *its sequel, and* The Croods. *James is now the director of character animation at Netflix.*
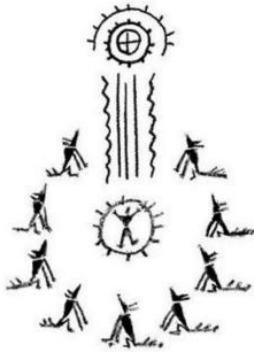
ABOVE *Overscaling the wolf suggests its power vis-à-vis Robyn. Artist: Tomm Moore.*

OPPOSITE *Robyn and Mebh confront the wolf pack. Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.*

I. Inspiration: Shape-shifters in Ireland

OPPOSITE *An inspirational study echoes tapestries of St. George and the Dragon. Concept by Alice Dieudonné.*

ABOVE *A sketch by Alice Dieudonné echoes the look of petroglyphs.*

RIGHT *A medieval illumination of the twelfth-century* Topographia Hibernica (Topography of Ireland) *by Gerald of Wales illustrating the story of the man-wolves of Ossory. This manuscript showing the Wolves of Ossory inspired the directors and concept artists early on both visually and for the story itself.*

Shape-shifters are popular figures in myths and folktales around the world. In Japan and China, foxes assume human form to bedevil the unwary. In Brazil, the river-dolphin Boto can turn into a boy; many Native American cultures have stories of "skin-walkers." Shape-shifters are not the werewolves of horror stories: cursed creatures who turn into ravening beasts when the moon is full. Shape-shifters alter their forms at will. The Selkies in *Song of the Sea* control when they transform; Sirius Black and Minerva McGonagall in the Harry Potter books can assume animal forms when they choose.

The most famous shape-shifters in Irish myths are the man-wolves of Ossory. In the twelfth-century *Topographia Hibernica* (*Topography of Ireland*), Gerald of Wales recounts the tale of a wandering monk who was asked by a wolf to give last rites to his dying mate—who was actually an aged woman. The wolf tells the priest that he and his wife are natives of Ossory who are cursed to live as animals every seven years. In other stories, certain inhabitants of Ossory leave their bodies in a seemingly lifeless state while they travel in animal form.
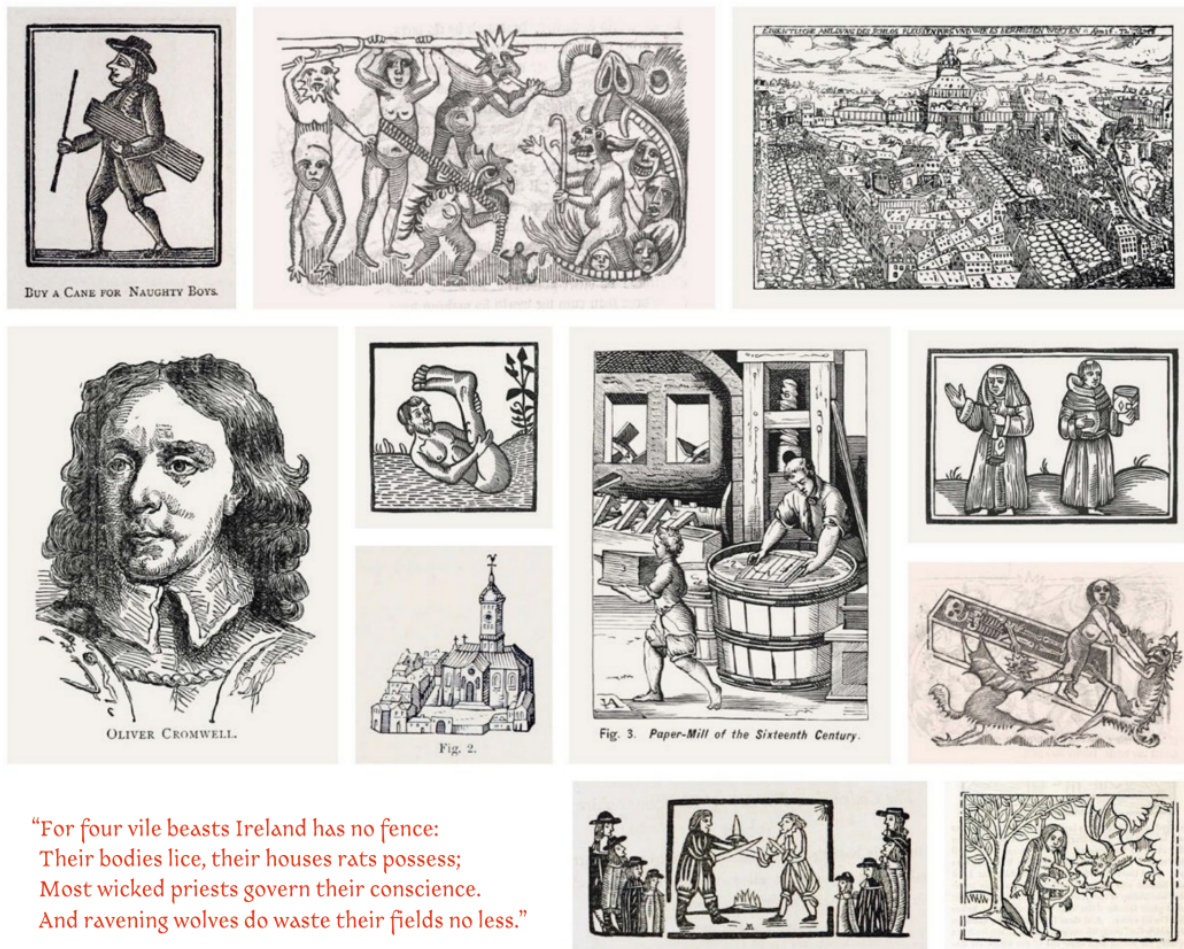
According to some accounts, these shape-shifters were the descendants of Laignech Fáelad, the ancestor of the kings of Ossory, whose medieval realm included most of County Kilkenny and County Laois. In others, when the ancient gods or *Tuatha Dé Danann* left Ireland, some of them remained and married mortals, whose children kept the supernatural power of transformation. Scholars speculate that some tales may be based on accounts of warriors who donned wolf-skins when they "went wolfing" (raiding).

Tomm Moore first heard about the Wolves of Ossory as a boy in the Young Irish Film Makers program: "I remember a lady named Angela Walsh talking about them and thinking even then it could be a good idea for a film or a comic book."

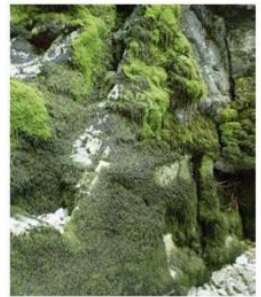But the idea would lie dormant for many years.

HISTORICAL INSPIRATION

BUY A CANE FOR NAUGHTY BOYS.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.   Paper-Mill of the Sixteenth Century.

"For four vile beasts Ireland has no fence:
 Their bodies lice, their houses rats possess;
 Most wicked priests govern their conscience.
 And ravening wolves do waste their fields no less."

STUDIO FIELD TRIPS

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OPPOSITE *A selection of etchings from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, including a portrait of Oliver Cromwell and a cityscape. These period materials influenced the use of line and flattened perspective in the backgrounds and designs for WolfWalkers—and helped to inspire elements of the story.*

1–5 *Field trips enabled the artists to experience the foliage, colours, scents, and light of the Irish forest, which they would try to capture in their artwork.*

6 *Tomm Moore and Arina Korczynski with a diorama of old Kilkenny.*

7 *The town of Kilkenny seen from St. Canice's Round Tower.*

II. Story

Tomm kept the Wolves of Ossory in his memory while he worked on other projects, including the first Irish animated features, *The Secret of Kells* (2009) and *Song of the Sea* (2014). When he began to think about a third film, he knew he wanted to work with Ross Stewart, his co-director on sequences for the American anthology feature *The Prophet* (2014). They created an original story using a process they'd learned from American writer and story artist Jim Capobianco, whose credits include *Ratatouille* and *Inside Out*.

WolfWalkers producer and Cartoon Saloon CEO Paul Young recalls, "Tomm heard Jim say that when he's trying to come up with ideas, he writes two lists: things he loves and things he hates. Obviously, all good stories have conflict, so he would make the lists to find the conflicts he needed. That's what Tomm and Ross did. An original idea brings a sense of ownership. You've no complications from people outside."

"We wanted to get in animal rights, wildness, freedom and oppression, folktales: all the things we love and are interested in," says Stewart.

"The main theme of the story is trying to find the balance that we need between nature and wildness, order and stability, rules and structure," states Moore. "We play that through all the characters: in the contrast between Mebh and Robyn, in Bill's internal battle over what is best for Robyn."

"I don't know when the Wolves of Ossory came back onto my radar; maybe while I was researching *Song of the Sea*," he adds. "On the Irish-language broadcaster (TG4), there was a series called *Wolfland*, about how Oliver Cromwell had tried to wipe out the wolves in Ireland to help tame the country. He wanted to show that he had control in a way the king he'd replaced didn't. We added the Wolves of Ossory, and the story started to take shape pretty quickly."

Moore and Stewart share an easy and immediately apparent rapport. They may not finish each other's sentences, but they develop a single thought while talking back and forth.

"Ross and I wanted to set the story in Kilkenny, and around that time Kilkenny was basically the capital of Ireland," Moore continues. "The more we researched the period, the more we understood the Puritan ethos that Cromwell embodied. We realized it was a huge part of what we wanted to talk about in terms of wildness versus order. When we thought about the Wolves of Ossory, we got the idea of two kids, one from England, one from Ireland, and how their worldviews collide."

Although the villain in the story is based on Oliver Cromwell, the artists took liberties with the historical figure and refer to him only as the Lord Protector.

"Cromwell was a natural bad guy in the mid-seventeenth century in Ireland," Stewart says. "We researched older Irish attitudes toward wolves. The Irish people had to live alongside wolves: There were stories about how wolves would protect people who treated them with kindness and respect. Then Cromwell comes and says, 'We're going to exterminate these animals;' the Irish would say, 'there's a place for them, there's a place for us.' We discovered we had a rich well to draw from."

To help write the story, Moore and Stewart called in screenwriter Will Collins, who had worked on *Song of the Sea*. Collins was beginning a new career as a screenwriter when he heard about *The Secret of Kells*. He recalls, "As soon as I saw the trailer on YouTube, I said, 'Those are the people I want to play with!' There was a very organic and natural overlap of our sensibilities, our cultural references, the types of stories we wanted to tell. My first feature was a kids' road movie set during Halloween weekend in 1987. Tomm was talking about a movie he wanted to do set over the same weekend.

It is better to live free than die in chains

wild VS *tame*
freedom/danger *cage/safety*
instinct *logic*

balance the 2 worlds

OPPOSITE *These brooding black-and-white storyboards emphasize the clash between the humans and the wolves. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

ABOVE *This stylized line drawing illustrates the conflict between the freedom of the natural world and the repression the human world imposes. Artist: Salomé Hammann.*

Complete serendipity! That began my adventure with them on *Song of the Sea*, which flowed into *WolfWalkers*.

"We all wanted to address the fact that our folklore is dissipating: Our stories are being lost to Western culture and TV," Collins explains. "The lads had the characters, the setting, and a really interesting dramatic premise: a hunter sent over to kill the last of the wolves. His daughter becomes the thing he's hunting. I'd never heard of the Wolves of Ossory until they told me the story, but it drew me in immediately."

The three men shared a creative process that was informal and amicable. "We would all get in a room together, hashing out beats of the story. I would go away and work it into an outline. Then we would burn the outline and build it again from scratch," Collins says with a laugh. "One person could have an idea, another could jump on that idea, and it would become a tennis match, back and forth. Then the third person would say, 'I think you're going down the wrong path.' That dynamic worked really well: Everything was challenged in a very constructive way, and we came up with a much stronger story."

"When I got to the project there was a completed script that the guys were ready to storyboard," adds assistant director Mark Mullery. "A lot changed in that period: The first act got heavily rewritten. I was afraid of being just a third, loud voice in the room. So I set myself a principle, which was when one of the guys said this and one of them said that, I'd be the tiebreaker. Or do my best to elucidate whatever point I thought worked or didn't work. Whenever they were truly stuck, I'd offer up ideas."

Many animated features are fantasies; *WolfWalkers* would be set in a real place at a specific time. "As a screenwriter, fantasy is a very challenging genre to work in because you have to define the limits of that universe, what can and cannot be done," Collins notes. "Working in a real, historic world makes things much easier. The magic was restricted to the Wolfwalkers: Everything else was real. When you have the contrast of the mundane real world, the magic pops."

As the story took shape, the Cartoon Saloon artists began working on the storyboards with the directors. The storyboard was Walt Disney's tool for bringing structure to the freewheeling cartoons of the 1920s and early 1930s. A series of drawings and captions pinned to cork panels, the storyboard enabled the director to preview the film and see if the story and the visuals were working together effectively.

On a live-action film set, the actors do multiple takes, varying their movements and line readings. The director and editor(s) review the
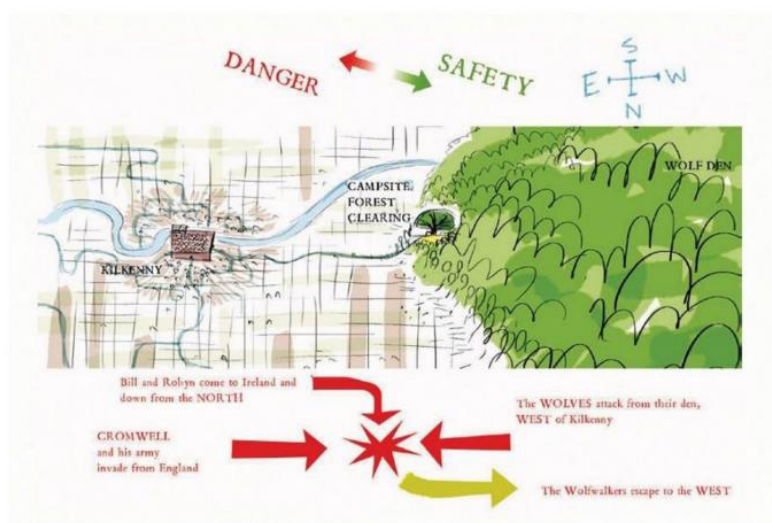
footage and pick the best versions—often stitching together pieces of various takes to create the best possible film. In animation, the storyboard artists explore ways to present each scene until the director is satisfied. It's not unusual for a scene that plays well on the printed page to need extensive reworking when it's storyboarded. The artists transform the words into visual images, suggesting how the scene should be staged, where the camera should be placed, what the attitude of animated actors should be.

"The storyboard artists would have really interesting ideas on how a scene should play out," says Collins. "I didn't have direct conversations with them, although I would give notes. Tomm and Ross know far better than I what works and what doesn't in the visual representation of my words. The storyboard artists put together stuff that was much better than what I had on the page."
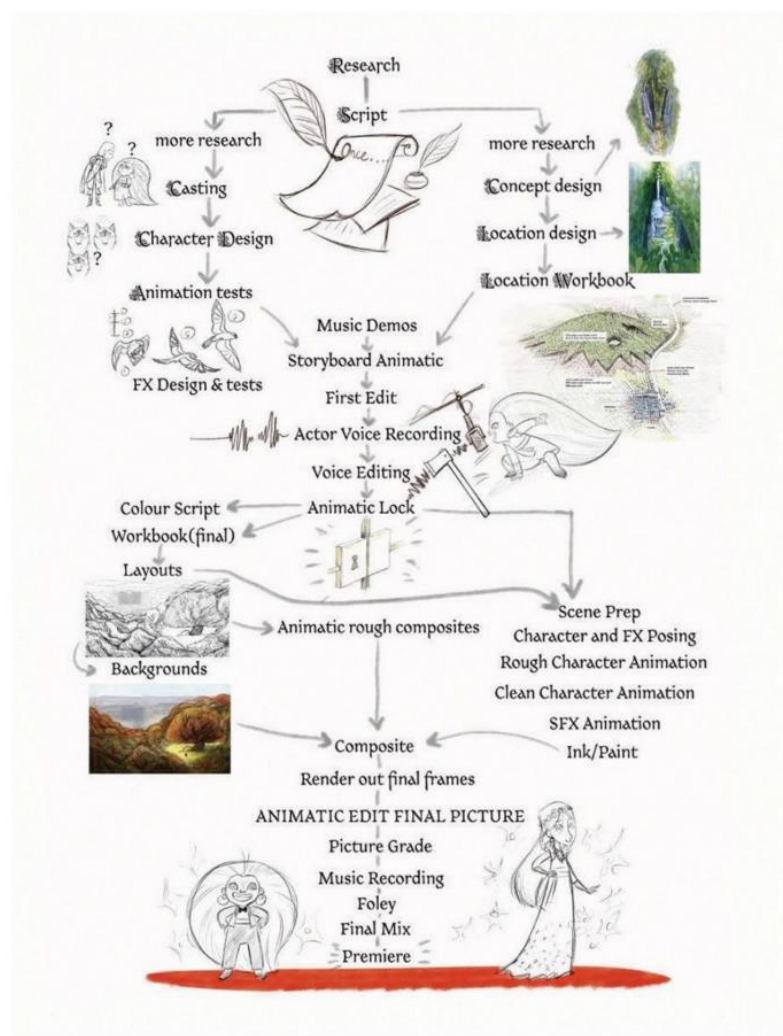
The editors work with the artists and directors to shape the storyboards into an animatic—a rough, preliminary version of the film. Editor Darragh Byrne explains, "In live action, you're stuck with whatever has been shot and you try to make the best of it. In animation, you can ask to go from a wide shot to a tight one, or to reshoot a whole scene that's not really working, which in live action

"But the central notion of witchcraft everywhere is the power to change into some fictitious form, usually in Ireland a hare or a cat. Long ago a wolf was the favourite."

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

ABOVE *A simple map of Kilkenny and its environs as characters in the film experience them. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

OPPOSITE *An organizational chart of Cartoon Saloon illustrates the flow of the animation process. Various artists.*

Research

Script

more research · more research

Casting · Concept design

Character Design · Location design

Animation tests · Location Workbook

Music Demos

FX Design & tests · Storyboard Animatic

First Edit

Actor Voice Recording

Voice Editing

Colour Script · Animatic Lock

Workbook (final)

Layouts

Scene Prep
Character and FX Posing
Animatic rough composites · Rough Character Animation
Clean Character Animation
Backgrounds · SFX Animation
Ink/Paint
Composite

Render out final frames

ANIMATIC EDIT FINAL PICTURE

Picture Grade

Music Recording

Foley

Final Mix

Premiere

"There's a lovely old Irish Gaelic word for wolf, Mac Tire, which means "son of the land." I think when people were speaking Irish, they thought differently about things because the names had different meanings."

TOMM MOORE, CO-DIRECTOR

you can't do. The animatic is where most of the editing is done in animation. You're trying to make the story feel like one voice, so viewers won't know it was done by five different board artists."

"If you have five or six storyboard artists working, you will get five or six different, very accomplished bodies of work that you need to make feel like a coherent movie," adds editor Richard Cody. "You have to make sure the characters are consistent and have an arc. Some artists focus more on visuals, some on character development. You may have a sequence that's great by itself but needs work to make it fit properly into the film.

"You can spend days working on a sequence, then find in the context of the greater animatic it's not needed," Cody says. "It may be an old idea that isn't worth keeping anymore, or the emotional beats in that sequence are better placed elsewhere in the movie. You question every single idea, making sure that it's needed and in the right place. You have to make sure it's supported by the setup and the payoff and the ideas around it. If it's doing all of those things, maybe it's worth keeping. Maybe."

"I had been an editor for a preschool show: a show where it's exactly seven minutes on the screen," says Mullery. "I would come in and say, 'Guys, you have to bring this to layout tomorrow, you cut these three shots, you merge these two and we're out.' Maybe if I were directing, that's not the approach I would take. But I felt I could be a knowledgeable someone who understands editing and could be dispassionate."

Three editors worked on *WolfWalkers*, polishing and focusing the animatic, to match the directors' vision. The first act of the film proved especially challenging and had to be reworked multiple times. Stewart comments, "Darragh should probably get a story credit because he did an amazing amount of boarding himself, picking images here and there, retelling the first act in editing."
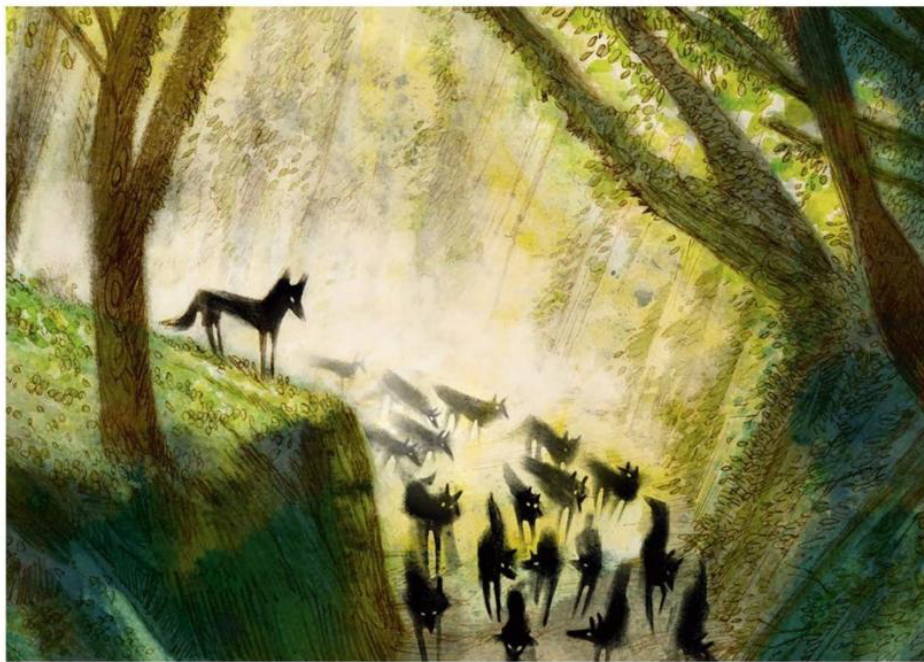
"This is the first action movie Cartoon Saloon has made, and the first where we've had a villain," Byrne replies. "We had a tricky time getting act one right: It was about making it dark, but not too dark; and fun, but not silly."

"*Song of the Sea* was a very personal story to me, and the storyboard artists were fleshing out exactly what I had in mind," adds Moore. "For *WolfWalkers*, Ross and I agreed to give more ownership to the storyboard artists, so people like Giovanna Ferrari and Louise Bagnall could bring something of their own to boards. Storyboarding took a long time: There was a lot of debate and discussion. We asked production for another eight months to rewrite huge sections at the start. I'd never done that before."

As is often the case, the filmmakers had to discover what they *didn't* want the film to be before they could figure out what they *did* want it to be. "The story was very dark and a bit more adult and grim before we realized that story wasn't the one we wanted to tell," says Stewart. "At one point, there was a long section with Bill and Robyn living in the forest before they got to Kilkenny. We realized, 'The story really starts when they get to Kilkenny, so let's cut the lonely forest backstory and join them when they're already engaged in city life.'"

Looking back over the story process, Moore says, "There's a melancholy to our ending: The wolves are displaced. They're refugees. They have to go. Anyone who knows history will know the wolves become extinct a hundred years later, so there is a melancholy aspect. But for the time being, they survive as a family."

ABOVE *Although the animals are drawn simply, this study conveys a sense of the light in the Irish forest. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

1 *The carcass of a wolf on display in central Kilkenny. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

2 *Mebh leads Robyn away from a threatening patrol. Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.*

3 *A stylized vision of the Lord Protector's troops invading the forest. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

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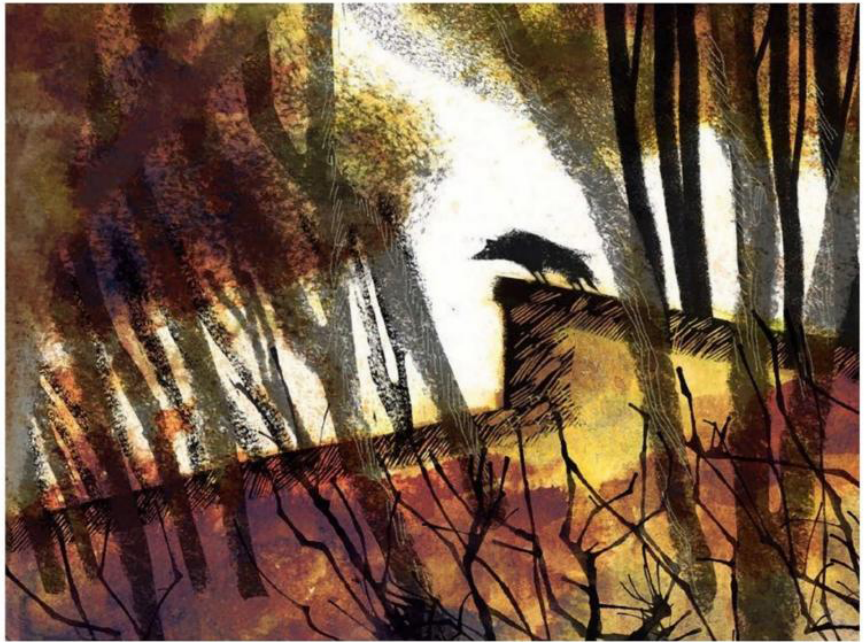
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Early studies of key moments in the film:

1 *Robyn confronts a wolf, and Robyn introduces Bill to a wolf. Layout by Friedrich Schäper; colour by Flora Taverner.*

2 *The hidden ravine, the heart of the wolf kingdom. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

3 *The ravine features dolmens adorned with rock carvings. Artist: Alice Dieudonné.*

4 *A wolf stands guard in the forest. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

5 *Even in silhouette, this wolf looks completely at home in the forest. Artist: Elliot Cowan.*

6 *Robyn passes by waterfalls to enter the wolves' ravine. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

7 *Robyn confronts Mebh and the wolf pack. Background by Alice Dieudonné; characters by Tomm Moore.*

7

EXT. WOODS - DAY

All is still. We are in a dense woodland forest.
The mossy forest floor is shaded by a thick canopy of trees.

A lazy rabbit ambles along. Stops and nibbles on a blade of grass.
It sniffs a too-perfect arrangement of leaves when--

FUMP!

EEK!

An arrow bolt kills the rabbit instantaneously.

The world is quiet again.

A man dressed in puritanical clothing emerges from behind a tree,
BILL GOODFELLOW (late 30's). He lowers a finely crafted crossbow.

Bill picks up the dead rabbit. He looks up to the sky and sees
through the canopy of trees -- a bird of prey circling.

Bill raises his arm to the sky and WHISTLES.

The bird tucks in its wings and glides down through
the trees. With a buffeting of wings it lands on Bill
outstretched arm. It's a hunting falcon, MERLYN.

Then --

A twig SNAP somewhere in the thick brush.

Bill turns with a start in the direction of the noise.

Without taking his eyes of the treeline he reloads
his crossbow. He carefully stalks forward.

MORE RUSTLING comes from behind a large tree.

Bill grips crossbow. Braces himself. Then darts around the tree.

REVEAL: Hiding on the other side of the tree is
a puritanical dressed girl who jumps with fright.

                    BILL
               Robyn!
                         ROBYN
                    (contrite)
               Father.

This is ROBYN GOODFELLOW (12) her long blonde hair
and face reveal her to be Bill's daughter.

                    BILL
     What are you thinking? You could have been shot..
or worse - eaten by some savage beast.. This is wolfland!

                    ROBYN
          I would shoot them first;
          I can take care of myself..

                    BILL
          If only you could, lass. Come on..

Bill escorts Robyn through the woods. Robyn raises her arm and
Merlyn gingerly flaps over to her.

                    BILL (CONT'D)
You must stay at the camp, Robyn. These woods are different from
          what you know - dangerous.. deadly.

TENSE

RELAX

FROM WOLF LUNGE TO
ASSISTANT UPSHOT OF CANOPY

CU THEY OFF   LEAVES RUSTLING

HAWK CRY!

KEEP HIM MYSTERIOUS.
C.U. ESTABLISHER

BILL TAKES CROSSBOW AWAY
FROM ROBYN—

ROBYN LAGS BEHIND SULKING

"NESTING" MERLYN LANDS ON R'S ARM.

RUNS TO CATCH UP

ROBYN
Stay at the camp all day, cleaning
and cooking? I should be out hunting
with you and Merlyn.
(TO MERLYN)
Isn't that right, Merlyn? Yes, I am a
good shot. Yes, father should know that.

Robyn strokes his plumage,
Merlyn arches his neck in satisfaction.

BILL
Womanly work is Godly work, Robyn.
It's not proper for gentlewomen to be
hunting.. Besides, I won't see you injured..

ROBYN
Oh yes, I can't be injured by
pots and pans and potatoes!

BILL
Hah, don't be cheeky, girl..

Father and daughter walk through the woods.
There is a natural ease between the two,
although Bill walks with crossbow armed.

-Bill peels bark off a tree.
Robyn braids the bark into rope.

-Robyn leans over a stream washing
her face in the water. A salmon glubs up
at her. Robyn smiles at the fish.

-Robyn collects berries from a bush. Shares
them with Bill. Robyn moves ahead of Bill and
she pushes through a bush.

BILL (CONT'D)
Robyn, STOP!

A sharp metal tooth pokes up from under the
grass. Robyn is about the stand right on it.

Bill grabs her wrist. Robyn freezes.
Bill lifts some moss with the tip of a bolt
to reveal --

A metal-toothed, ANIMAL LEG TRAP
waiting to clamp shut

BILL (CONT'D)
These traps are set here to
protect you, not catch you!

Robyn blushes. She sees a ring of
leg traps around a camp.

ROBYN
Sorry, father. I thought the camp
was further on.

Bill smiles and gives her a hug.

these kind of dreamlike shots could be nice here

DON'T BE CHEEKY!

MOVING LINES   LITTLE FISH I LEAVES   ROBYN REFLECTION
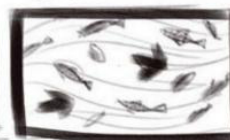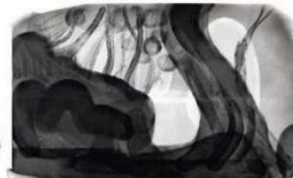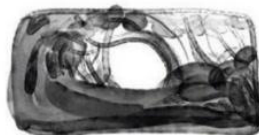
EXT. OLD PATH - SAME TIME
Two Soldiers tiptoe along an old path. The
TALL SOLDIER hears a canine WHIMPERING
in the bushes. He turns to the sound. He
charges forward into the bush. They charge
into the bushes and -- WHIP! WHIP! They've
walked into two ancient traps. Wolf Robyn
emerges from the shadows and looks up at
the pair of soldiers dangling by their
legs in the trees. Then she's off like a
flash.

INT. CAVE - SAME TIME

Mebh is still trying to heal her mother.
Sweat drips down her brow. The healing
glow under her hands is beginning to fade.
She drops her hands in defeat.

MEBH
I can't Mammy. I'm not strong enough.
Please, tell me what to do.

Mebh presses her face to her slepping
mother's hand. She opens her eyes and
sees--
POV MEBH - The mural on the wall depicts a
pack of wolves sat in a circle. A glorious
light radiates from them. Mebh looks at
the ground and sees a circular worn patch
on the ground where the wolves sit: The
pack. Mebh closes her eyes. She cups her
hands around her mouth and howls as loud
as she can. Her howl resonates around the
cave and echoes out across the ravine,
into the wider forest.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - SAME TIME

Two more soldiers search through the
thickets. CAAA! Merlyn swoops down from
the trees and attacks one. RAR! Wolf Robyn
bursts out of a bush and drags another
away. POV WOLF ROBYN - She sees the trails
of the soldiers fleeing back towards the
town when she hears Mebh's howl. Mebh
needs help. In the next instant the wolves
flood past her. Whatever they were once
doing is now abandoned.

EXT. RAVINE ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Bill hears the howl. The soldiers look
left and right.

wolf den   army

example of cave art
wolf circle

Mebh against cheek of mother, not hand

mebh gets it

howls

sees the wolf
pack missing

it echoes out down
through the ravine

example of how a trap might work

robyn
watches

POV

Wolves opposite way

Bill hears the howl - it is working on him now
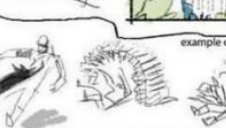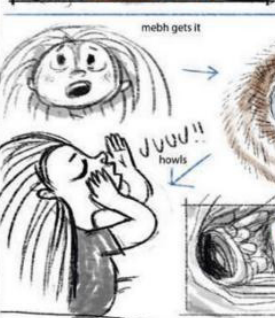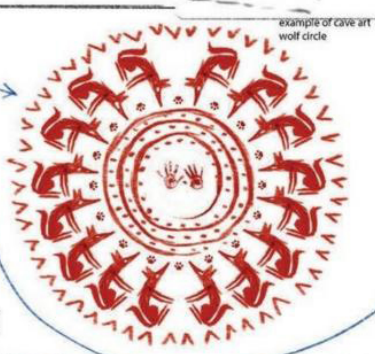
She leaps into the air and lands on
the rip of the cannon. The Lord
Protector watches with horror as...

BILL (cont'd)
ROBYN!

KABOOM!

INT> CAVE - DAY
Mebh concentrates as she tries to
heal Moll. The wounded woman looks
even more pale. Even with the wolves,
Mebh is losing this battle.

KABOOM!

Mebh looks up at the sound. She gasps.

MEBH
Robyn...

Mebh turns her back to her mother
and continues chanting.

EXT. WATERFALL - CONTINUOUS

Dirt. Smoke. Embers fill the air.

Bill's ears ring from the explosion.

Bill blinks. He looks down at Robyn.
Her breathing is ragged. He is chained
to the huge unconscious horse.

BILL
Robyn. Robyn.

He looks up.

A fresh crater exists where the cannon
was. Debris is scattered all about.
Wounded soldiers lie still.

The dust settles slowly.
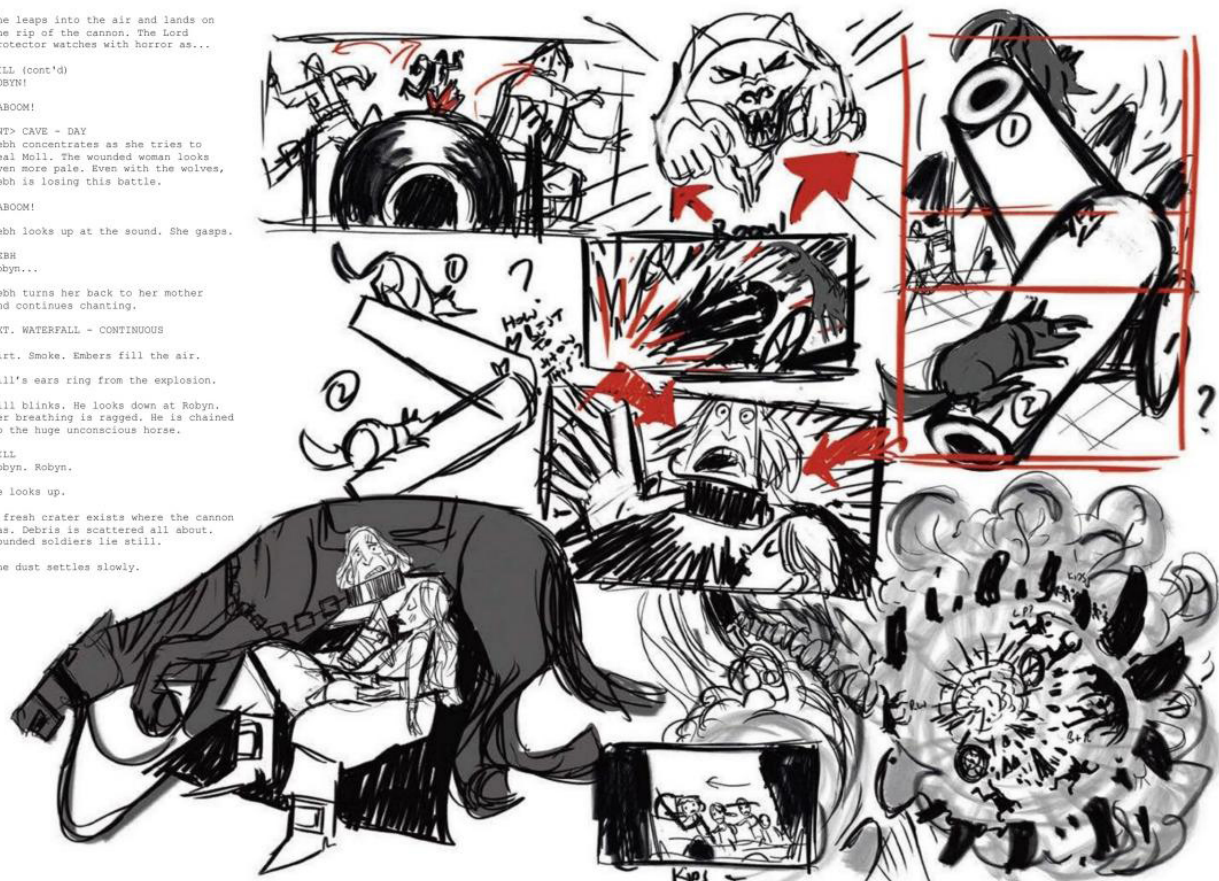
EXT. WINDING LANE - NEW VALLEY - EVENING
Cromwell's horse pulls a battered wagon down
a winding road into a new valley. Moll holds
the reins with Bill sitting beside her. Bill
turns back and looks inside the wagon.

INSIDE THE WAGON - Robyn is laying down to
sleep beside an already snoozing Mebh.

BILL
Here, lass.

Bill pulls a blanket and tucks Robyn up
nice and snug. He kisses her forehead.

BILL (cont'd)
All is well, my love.

ROBYN
All is well, father.

Robyn beams a smile up at her father before
closing her eyes. Bill sits forward and
turns his attention back to Moll who CLICKS
the horse along the road. Bill holds up a
calendula flower out to Moll.

MOLL
All our wounds have been healed, Bill.

BILL
They have, Moll. They have. Where to now?

MOLL
Somewhere without cages... Without chains...
Where we can be wild.

Moll takes the calendula and places it in
her hair.

ON THE ROAD - The cart rides toward us. The
wolf pack overtake it on either side like
wisps. Wolf Mebh charges up from the rear.

WOLF MEBH
Come on!

Wolf Robyn pops out the side of the wagon
and joins Wolf Mebh as they race alongside
the wolf pack. They stream up the road, off
the path and onto the brow of a hill to a
rocky outcrop. The road stretches on ahead
over hills and hills of woodland. We hear
Bill and Moll's voices...

BILL AND MOLL
"Close your eyes the wolf comes near/Round
the moon he brings you cheer/Howls the
wolf!/Howls the wolf!"

Robyn and Mebh howl at the top of the hill
and the pack joins in... We look out across
the wilderness...

THE END

west →

est shot - wild part of ireland. wagon on dirt track

it ambles along, sunny peaceful setting

cromwells horse walks (happy!) and moll, bill sit on wagon

They exchange a glance
Bill turns to look back inside

cosy circular happy family. Mebh asleep
Sunlight pours in in circle

All is well,
my love.

all our wounds have been
healed, Bill

Where to now?

Come
on!

Robyn wolf leaps out
of back of wagon

Robyn wolf and Mebh wolf run - we leave the wagon behind

Location - wagon stays on dirt track.
Wolves run ahead, then off road, up a
rocky outcrop...

EARLY IDEAS

STORYBOARDS

Storyboard artists convert the words of the script to visual images. A storyboard panel must convey what is happening in a scene simply and clearly: the movements of the characters, their acting and expressions, the mood of the scene, the placement of the characters within the background, any camera moves. Storyboards are drawn, redrawn, and drawn again, as the directors, artists, and editors shape the film, making sure each scene contributes to the story.
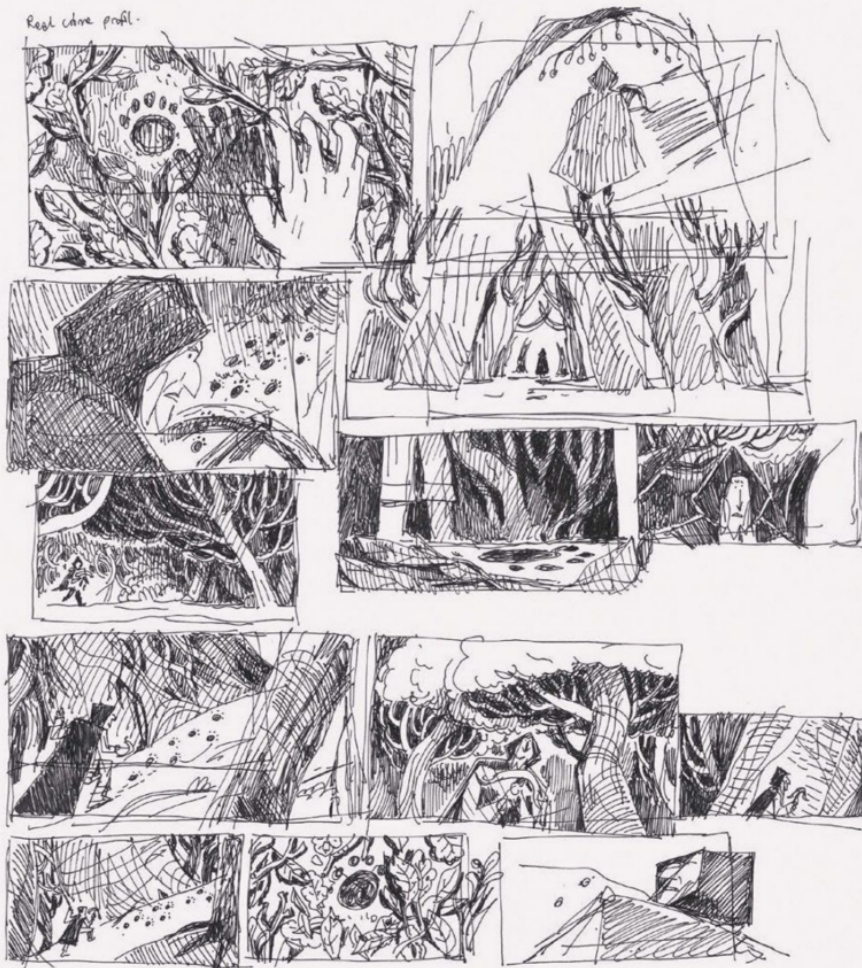
THIS PAGE Artist: Ross Stewart.

OPPOSITE Artist: Arina Korczynski.
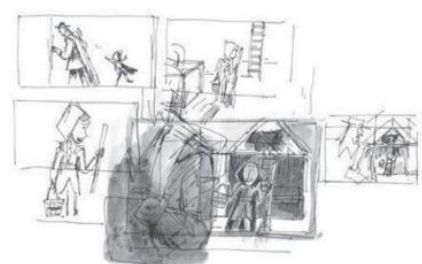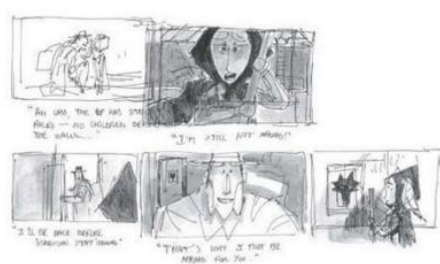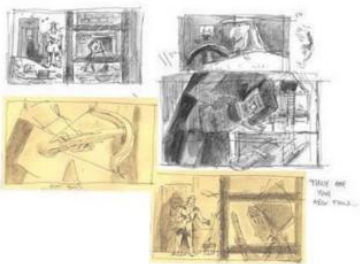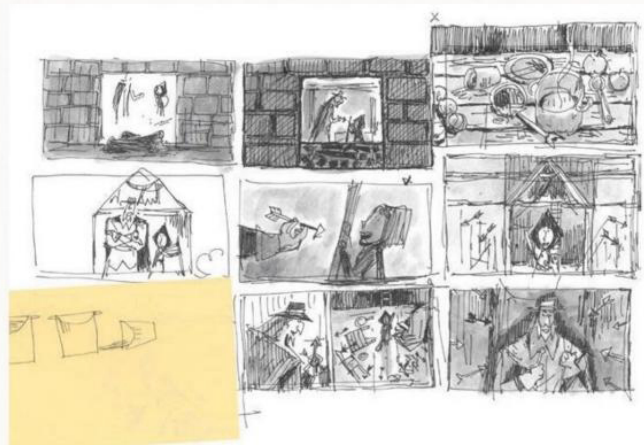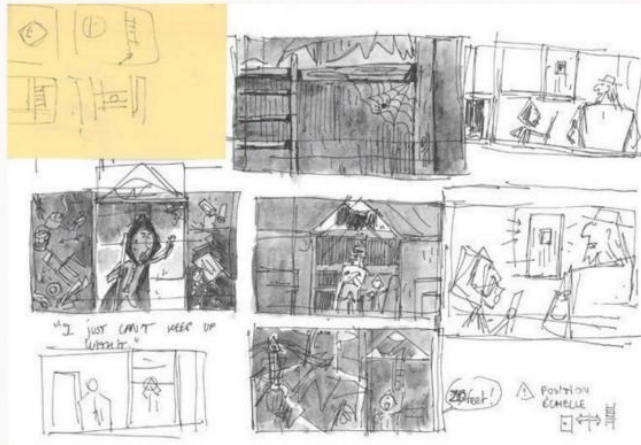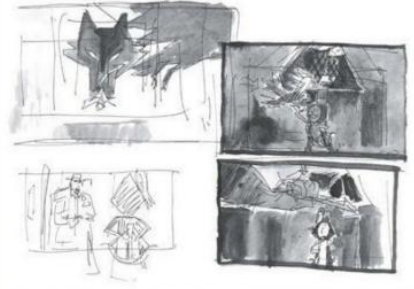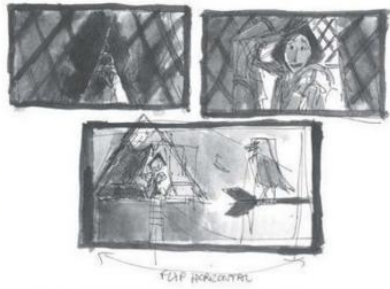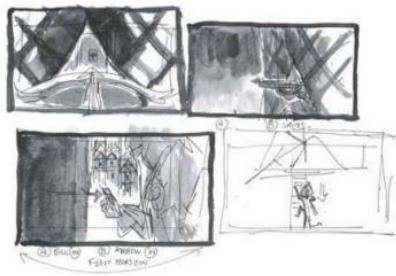
THIS SPREAD Artist: Arina Korczynski.

THIS PAGE Artists: Iker Maidagan and Guillaume Lorin.

OPPOSITE Artists: Iker Maidagan, Tomm Moore, and Guillaume Lorin .
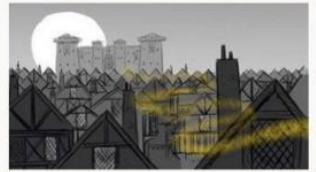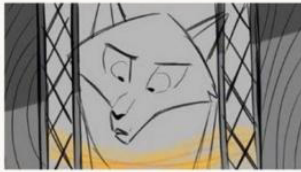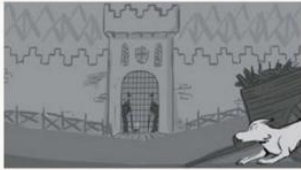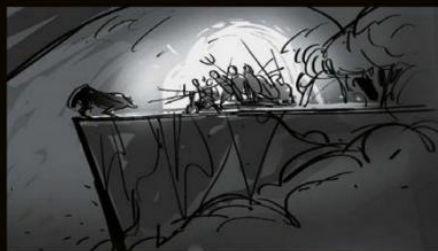
LEFT *Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*
OPPOSITE *Artist: Arina Korczynski.*
FOLLOWING SPREAD, LEFT *Artist: Guillaume Lorin.*
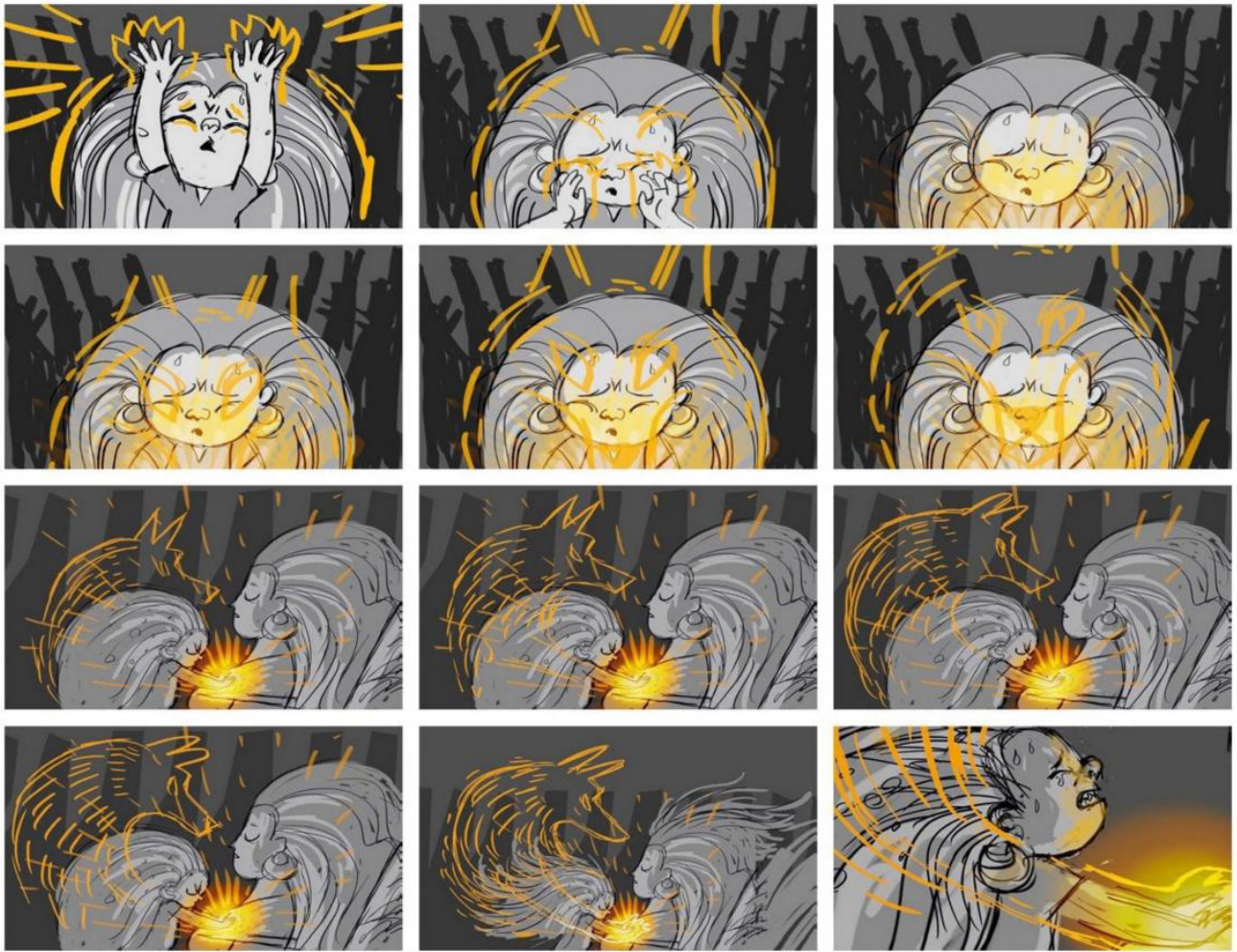FOLLOWING SPREAD, RIGHT *Artist: Iker Maidagan.*

Text within storyboard panel: HURRY WITH THAT WEAPON.

LEFT Artists: Giovanna Ferrari and Iker Maidagan.

OPPOSITE Artist: Ross Stewart.

III. Characters

OPPOSITE *Robyn struggles to keep up with Mebh and the pack. Characters by Tomm Moore; background by Ross Stewart.*

The Cartoon Saloon artists worked to create a story that offered conflict, strong emotions, humor, pathos, and a resolution. But the audience had to care about the characters for the film to succeed: The most fantastic battles and elaborate chases mean nothing if the audience isn't invested in the main characters' fate. From Pinocchio leaving Geppetto's workshop to Brendan sneaking out of the Abbey of Kells to Chihiro going to work in Yubaba's bathhouse, memorable animated characters have undergone trials and adventures that won them a place in viewers' hearts.

Much of the story process for *WolfWalkers* involved developing the personalities of Robyn and Mebh. Their relationship—and how they related to the other characters—was the key to the success of the film. In the first drafts of the story and early preliminary drawings, Robyn was a boy, whose friendship with Mebh echoed Brendan's bond with Aisling in *The Secret of Kells*.

"Bill and Robyn were originally a father-and-son team: a hunter and his apprentice," Moore recalls. "We realized that what Robyn would be up against in that society as a girl offered more drama and conflict because she wasn't just going against her father's wishes, she was going against society's expectations. The idea of a girl trying to be a hunter was defying Puritan society—which made a much stronger, much more interesting story.

"I based Robyn on my wife as a little girl: a little bit visually, but more on her being strong-willed and determined—and loving animals and nature," he continues. "That helped me get my head around who she might be as a character. It was easier for me as a director to deal with Brendan in *The Secret of Kells* and Ben in *Song of the Sea*, because they were based on me and my son."

"When I'm writing any story, I try to make it as personal as possible," adds Collins. "One of my best friends growing up was my neighbor Shirley, who was a tomboy. We came from very different families, but that friendship was a happy oasis when we were going through personal problems. I used it as my touchstone when trying to fashion Robyn and Mebh's relationship. Mebh is more tomboyish and wild; Robyn's more bookish and nervous. Because they're kids, they approach their differences not with fear and animosity, but with playfulness and curiosity. It's the adults who are fearful and defensive."

The artists wanted to be sure their lead characters honestly depicted girls' experiences. Stewart notes, "A story with female leads directed by two guys could be a little inauthentic. We wouldn't be able to draw wholly from our life experiences. But we had really good female storyboarders who brought a lot to the personalities of Robyn and Mebh: I think they were drawing from their childhoods and brought a truth to the girls that would be hard for us to do."

The Puritan society the Lord Protector represents maintained strict gender roles, which its members believed were based on biblical dictates. It was a society with rigid rules: Disobedience could mean banishment, imprisonment, or even death.

"It was a time when girls had no voice and no say," Stewart comments. "Robyn comes to Ireland wanting to have a life with her father out in the woods, hunting and playing. Suddenly she's ordered to work in the scullery. It makes sense in the story for her to have these chains put around her because of her gender.

"In contrast, Mebh and Moll are powerful females and the last Wolfwalkers," he continues. "In Irish mythology and folklore, they had a great reverence for the mother goddess—in complete opposition to Puritanism, which was a more male-focused religion. Moll and Mebh represent the Irish traditions and religion that are being stamped out."

The lessons Robyn is expected to learn are articulated by the Head Housekeeper, a soft-spoken woman who oversees the domestic servants in the Lord Protector's headquarters.

The Head Housekeeper is voiced by producer Nora Twomey, who says, "It's interesting that she doesn't have a name; I like to call

her Bridgette. She's middle-aged, downtrodden, and invisible. She tries to teach Robyn you survive the world she's in by keeping your head down, by doing your work, by trying to get through the day. It sounds like good advice, but it's how to die slowly. It's how to stifle yourself to death—or be stifled. I see a lot of the history of women in Ireland in her silence."

Robyn, who had enjoyed greater freedom in England, rebels against this enforced drudgery. When Bill admonishes her with the Puritan adage "Work is prayer," she replies, "Then I've prayed the whole Bible!"

Honor Kneafsey, who provides Robyn's voice, says, "Robyn thinks she's braver than she actually is. She's scared of a lot of things, yet she'll put on a front to show everyone she can do something. Because her father's a hunter, she thinks she can be one, too. Maybe she can, maybe she can't. Throughout the film she becomes more independent and finds things she's really good at. Mebh teaches her more and more things she enjoys. Mebh brings out the best in Robyn, and she likes that."

Although Robyn likes to think of herself as independent, she grew up in a far more circumscribed world than Mebh, whose home is the forest. Stewart explains, "Mebh is an innocent girl, but she's also the leader of a wolf pack. She represents wildness and spirit, but she's also the vulnerable aspect of nature that can be damaged. Robyn represents the invader, but she's also an innocent trapped in Cromwell's master plan. The girls become best friends because they enjoy each other's company. But they're caught up in this bigger scheme of the destruction of the environment."

"Mebh is very impulsive, still very young, a not terribly responsible kid who's suddenly been given this huge responsibility by her parent," adds Moore. "Robyn is very competent and responsible and wants to prove herself, but her father doesn't give her the responsibility that she craves."

"At the beginning, Robyn and Mebh don't like each other because they see their differences clearly," Kneafsey says. "As the story goes on, the differences become smaller, and they bounce off each other. It's a sister bond between them."

"Getting Robyn and Mebh right was very important: If that friendship didn't work, the rest of the movie wasn't going to work," Byrne comments. "Robyn is more like a Miyazaki female character: She's her own person, and she's escaping. But Mebh is going to be everyone's favorite character."

Bill is caught in a web of conflicting duties and obligations. He wants his daughter to be happy, but he also wants her to be safe. He believes in the rules of the Puritan society he lives in, but he chafes at its restrictions—especially at the limits it imposes on Robyn.

"Bill is a father trying to do his best, trying to look after his daughter, trying to steer her through a menacing world," says Stewart. "But he's also the Lord Protector's soldier. He has duties to fulfill, and he's trying to avoid punishment for himself and for his daughter. He's a soldier and a father—and a pawn in Cromwell's master plan. You can't really blame him for that."

"We're working through the disconnect when parents become so protective they don't realize they're crushing their child's will," adds Moore. "Bill is really trying to control Robyn: He's a bit like the Abbot in *Kells*. But he's also a soldier and a cog in the machine. He's closed himself off to how he'd like things to be. As a Puritan, he's been told that civilized people live under these orders. It's only by leaving that society that he finds a freer way to live."

Early drafts of the story explored how many men like Bill came from the lower classes in England and Scotland. The military campaign in Ireland offered a chance to advance socially and financially. But explaining his motivations shifted the focus of the story from Robyn to Bill. So the filmmakers simplified Bill's backstory: He's always been a soldier.

"Bill became too interesting," Stewart explains. "Because we're middle-aged men, we were relating to the middle-aged male character too much and losing sight of Robyn. Bill had to fade into a more archetypal role."

As they developed Bill's character, Collins, Moore, and Stewart all had a single actor in mind to provide his voice: Sean Bean, best known to audiences as the noble but conflicted Boromir in Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* movies and the honorable to a fault Ned Stark in the TV series *Game of Thrones*. Collins says, "When I was writing, I had Sean Bean's voice in my head very clearly."

The vocal performances provide an important tool for animators. They time the mouth movement to match the vocal track so that the characters look like they're speaking the lines. The way an actor delivers a line will also suggest how the characters act. Animators agree that a good vocal track is essential to creating a convincing performance on screen.

"At the beginning, Bill's very much in control of his child and follows the orders of the Lord Protector," Bean says. "The Puritan way of thinking is quite restrictive: Everything of comfort or joy was frowned upon. Bill tries to be strict with Robyn, but eventually discovers she's quite special. He could never believe in anything as supernatural and bizarre as what he sees with his own eyes, but he
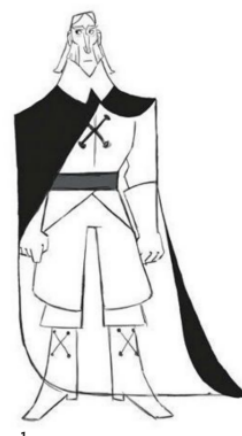
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"Obviously, we have dialogue and a story to tell, but we also had to do lots of howling, growling, yelping, whining, and whimpering. I did some mad things with my voice that I've never had the opportunity to do before. There'll be no stopping me now."

MARIA DOYLE KENNEDY,
VOICE OF MOLL

1   *A simple, clear black-and-white version of Bill. Artist: Louise Bagnall.*

2–4   *Three members of the voice cast at the recording sessions. Left to right: Sean Bean (Bill), Maria Doyle Kennedy (Moll), Simon McBurney (Lord Protector).*

5–6   *Drawings of Moll and the Lord Protector. Artist: Federico Pirovano.*

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realizes everything she said was true. For a man in Cromwell's army, it's a massive leap of faith and imagination."

If the Lord Protector is a patriarchal figure, Moll represents the ancient, powerful maternal spirit Stewart described. As the leader of the pack, she leaves her human body to prowl the forest, ensuring nothing threatens the wolves. When she is imprisoned, Mebh must assume her role as leader—while searching desperately for her mother. Moll also has to be convincing as both a human and a wolf.

Moll's voice is provided by Irish actress/musician Maria Doyle Kennedy, who played Vera Bates in *Downton Abbey*. "It's the search for her mother that drives Mebh throughout the story," she says. "She's separated from her mother, and through the separation she assumes a new mantle. It's a separation that circumstances necessitate, for a short while. It becomes longer and more fraught. Moll passes the baton to Mebh: 'I don't wish for us to part, but we must address the situation we're in.' I think women often do that.

"There's all of the questions around being maternal but recognizing the growing up of your own child: surrendering to it, allowing it to happen, letting go," she adds. "Moll allows Mebh some responsibility; the townspeople hold their children in a fearful way, not allowing them any sort of independence or freedom. It's very difficult for them to grow at all."

Simon McBurney played characters as diverse as Oliver Lacon in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and the voice of the embittered house-elf Kreacher in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* before tackling the Lord Protector, the fictionalized version of Oliver Cromwell in *WolfWalkers*. "Playing Oliver Cromwell is always complex and difficult, not only because of what he did in Ireland," he says. "He's

a very interesting character, with a monstrous, obsessive side. He truly felt it his religious duty to do what he did and found justifications for it in the Bible.

"In *WolfWalkers*, he's the authority figure who's trying to civilize the country. The Wolves represent the wild part of nature, which he believes he has a God-given right to overcome," McBurney explains. "The Lord Protector isn't all bad; he has his moments of doubt. He gets his comeuppance. But he's a very important character who provides drama and tension. He believes that civilization is close to Godliness, and whatever is wild is chaotic and therefore devilish. The older, deeper beliefs are dismissed as witchcraft or deviltry."

Casting children's voices for animated roles can be challenging: The actors have to sound spontaneous and natural while delivering their lines. If they sound too polished, the delivery will take the audience out of the moment. When he was casting the voice of Russell in *Up*, Pixar director Pete Docter complained that there seemed to be a school where young actors were taught to over-project and over-articulate. For the animated "Peanuts" specials, director Bill Melendez and producer Lee Mendelson chose elementary school children with little or no formal training.

"With young actors, you always look for unknowns: You rarely get an established person or a preconceived notion of a voice," says Collins. "In my head, I knew Robyn was English and would have a Northern English accent. The guys cast both girls absolutely perfectly."

"We had a good casting director, Louise Kiely, who got us loads of audition tapes," replies Moore. "But once Honor appeared, we were sure she was right for us. She's a more experienced, professional actor."

"For Mebh, we wanted an Irish girl who had a real country Irish accent," says Stewart. "Unfortunately, a lot of the auditions were from theatrical actors who either sounded posh or had lost any country accent—not the Mebh we needed. Eva Whittaker popped up and she was so full of attitude: so confident and cheeky with a sense of humor. I fell in love with her voice and her performance immediately.

"For the final recordings, when she came in, she could go into floods of tears, and the whole room would be silent," Stewart recalls. "At the end of the performance, someone would say, 'Eva, are you okay?' And she'd answer with a beaming smile, 'Yes, I'm fine!'"

 Reflecting on her performance, Whittaker says, "I had to work a lot on the anger, the pain, and the sadness behind it all. There was a lot of growling and shouting in it. They needed to have me sound like a wolf for a few lines, especially when she gets really angry. Sometimes, when she's talking, she's growling at the same time. She shows how hard it is to lose a parent: Her mother was all she had before she met Robyn."

"Eva broke my heart when she read that one word: 'Mammy.' When she said it, she brought me back to my own childhood," concludes Collins. "We would've pronounced 'mammy' that way. She made chills go down the back of my neck. She was amazing. So was Honor: She just completely got it."

ABOVE *Eva Whittaker (Mebh) and Honor Kneafsey (Robyn) record their lines.*

RIGHT *The colour lineups ensure that the animators maintain the correct size relationships among the characters. Various artists.*

ROBYN
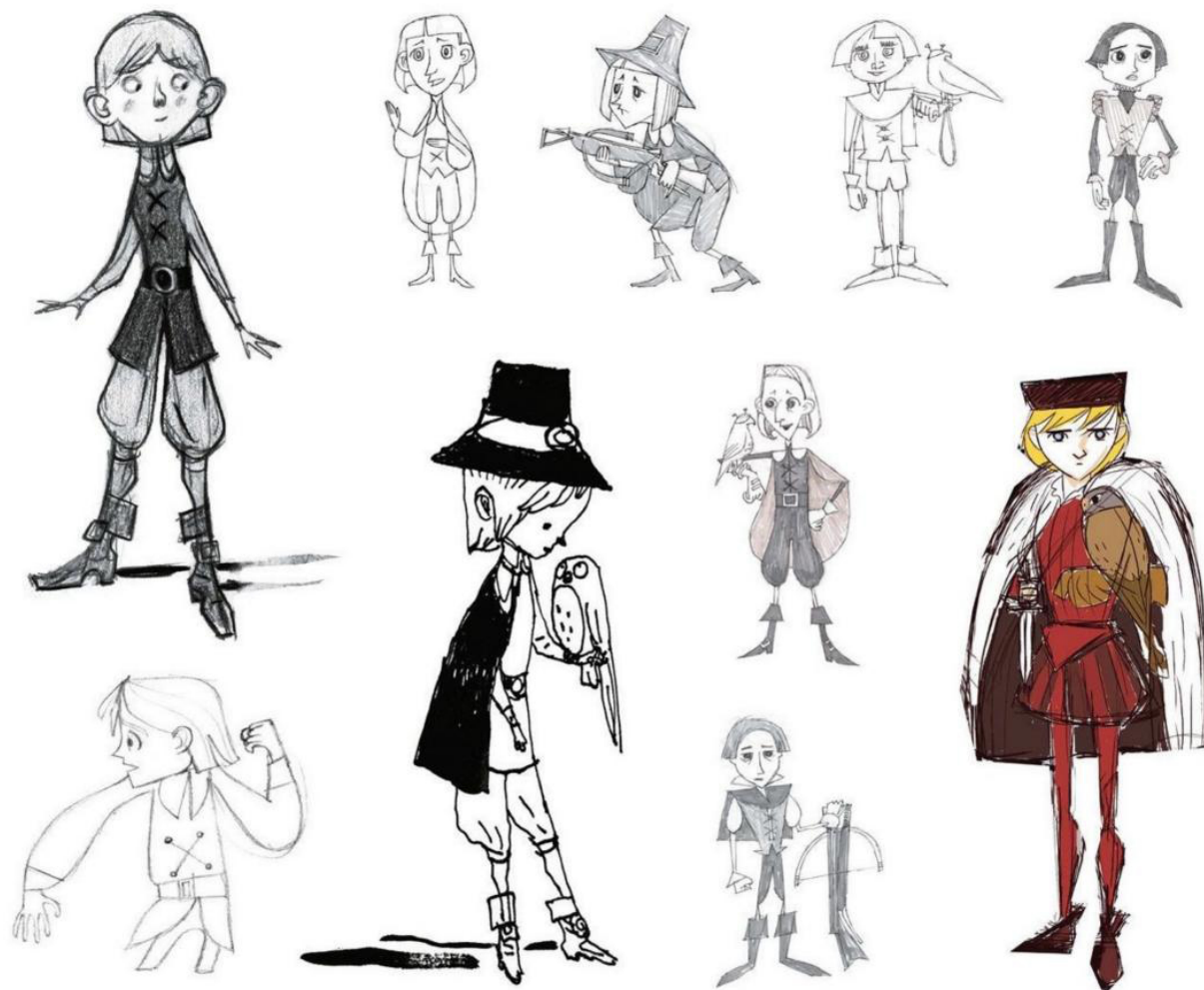
"If Robyn had stayed a boy, I don't think the stakes in the story would have been the same. As a boy, if Robyn had achieved his goal of becoming a hunter, it would have been seen as a positive thing, because it would follow accepted gender roles. The drama and the conflict are more interesting because she is a girl. I knew Robyn as a girl; I never really felt the character as a boy."

TOMM MOORE, CO-DIRECTOR

OPPOSITE *Ross Stewart's, Cyril Pedrosa's, and Tomm Moore's (in colour) early sketches of Robyn as a boy reveal the artists exploring the character's personality, as well as his physical appearance.*

RIGHT *This striking study of Robyn with Merlyn and a wolf combines psychological insight and graphic elegance. Artist: Jean Baptiste Vendamme.*

LEFT *A charcoal drawing shows Robyn's inquisitive nature. Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.*

ABOVE *Two watercolour studies of Robyn suggest the character's mood. Artist: Tomm Moore.*

OPPOSITE *This dramatic watercolour sketch captures character and movement through its complex interplay of shapes. Artist: Tomm Moore.*
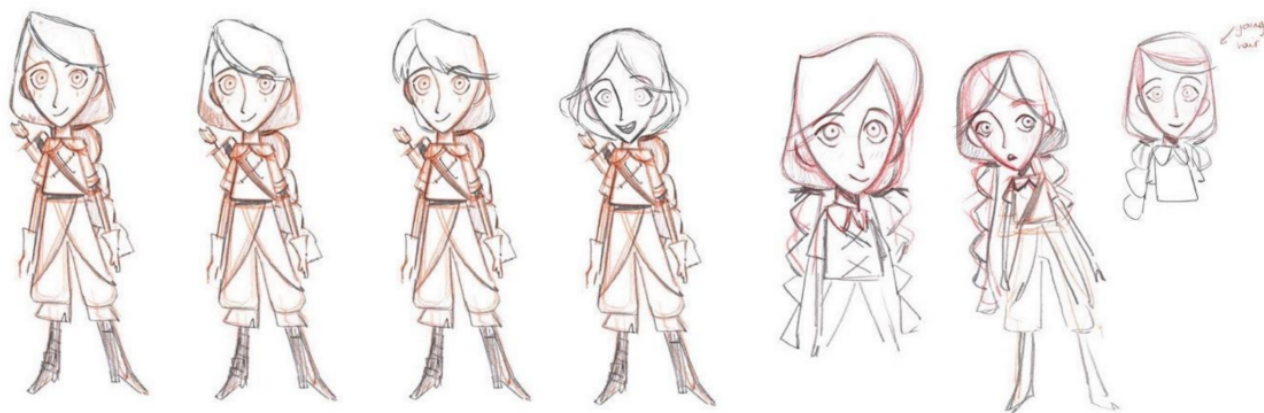
Everyone agrees that making Robyn a
girl greatly strengthened the story. In
these early sketches, the artists begin
exploring the personality and look of
the female Robyn.

ABOVE *Artist: Louise Bagnall.*

LEFT *Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

OPPOSITE *Artist: Federico Pirovano.*

Finding an effective design for an animated character requires countless preliminary drawings, as the artists explore graphic styles and personality.

1   Artist: Arina Korczynski.

2   Artist: Louise Bagnall.

3   Artist: Arina Korczynski.

4   Artist: Friedrich Schäper.

5–6 Artist: Sandra Andersen.

7   Artist: Tomm Moore.

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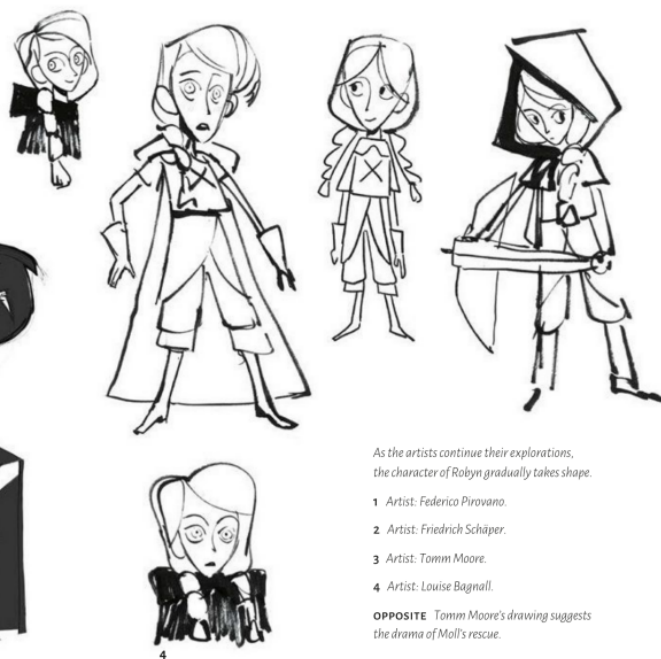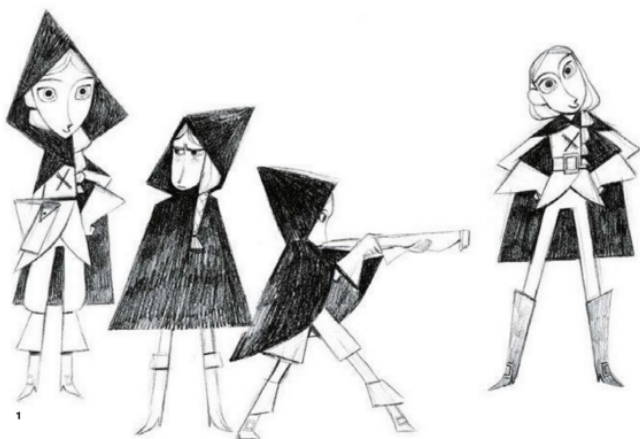
As the artists continue their explorations,
the character of Robyn gradually takes shape.

1 Artist: Federico Pirovano.

2 Artist: Friedrich Schäper.

3 Artist: Tomm Moore.

4 Artist: Louise Bagnall.

OPPOSITE Tomm Moore's drawing suggests
the drama of Moll's rescue.
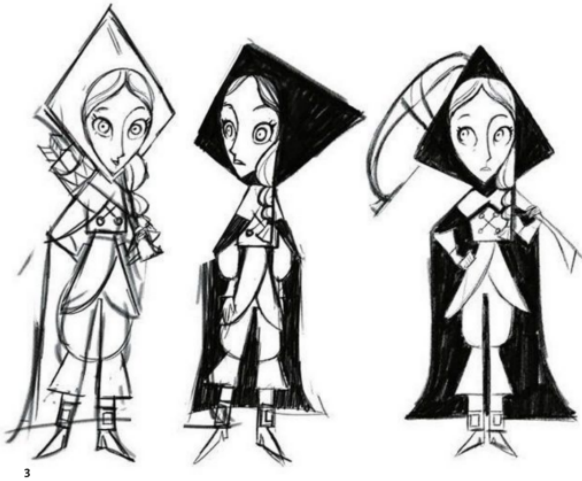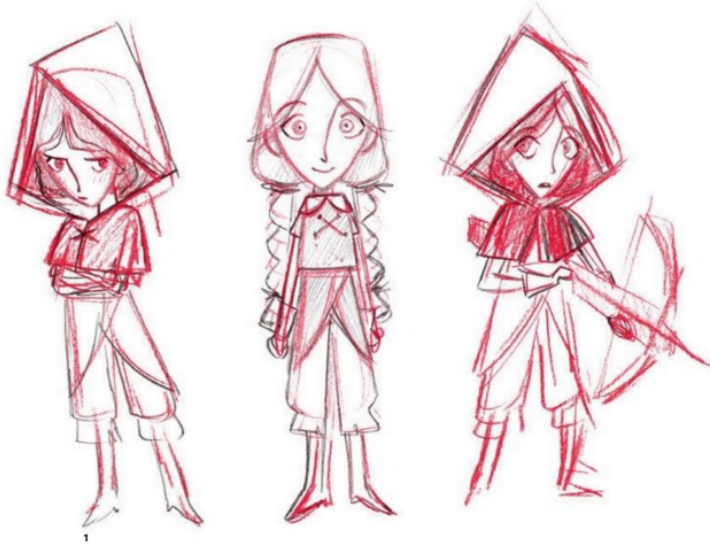
Turnarounds and costume explorations for Robyn.

1 Artist: Louise Bagnall.

2–3 Artist: Tomm Moore.

4 Robyn begins to assume her final form. Layout by Leo Weiss; character by Giovanna Ferrari.

5 Character models and expression suggestions. Artist: Tomm Moore.

4

5

Characters 61
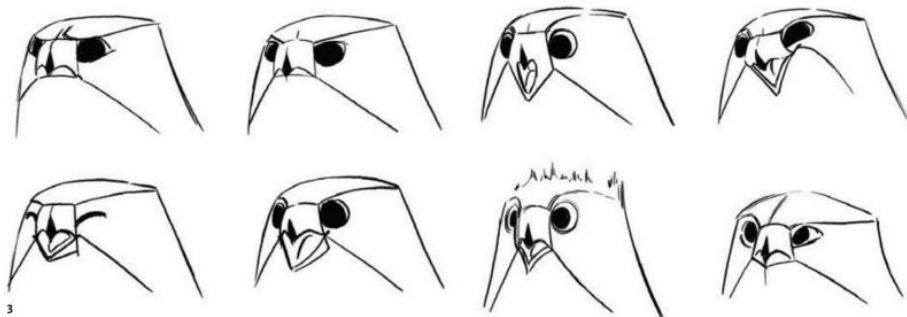
MERLYN

Merlyn, Robyn's falcon companion, had to convey the movements of a bird convincingly while conforming to the graphic style of the film.

1 Artist: Sandra Andersen.

2 Background: Ross Stewart; character: Tomm Moore.

3 In these sketches, artist Sif Savery tried some more cartoony expressions for Merlyn.

4 A watercolour preliminary study. Artist: Tomm Moore.

5 Suggested poses. Artist: Sif Savery.

6 Additional studies. Artist: Anita Caughan.

4

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6
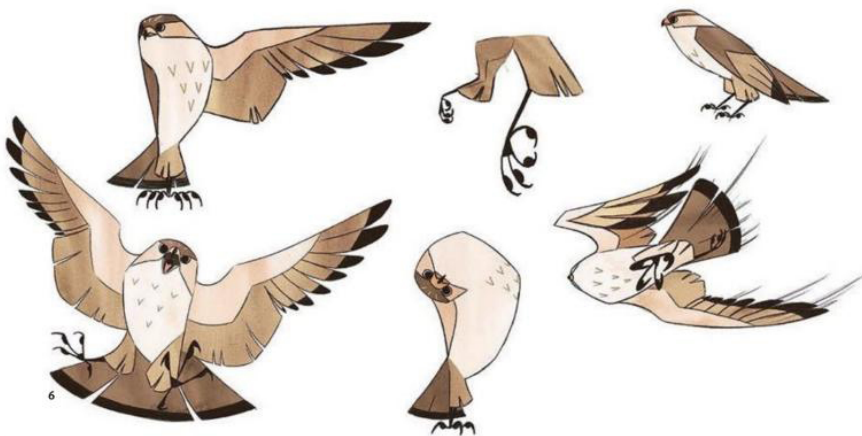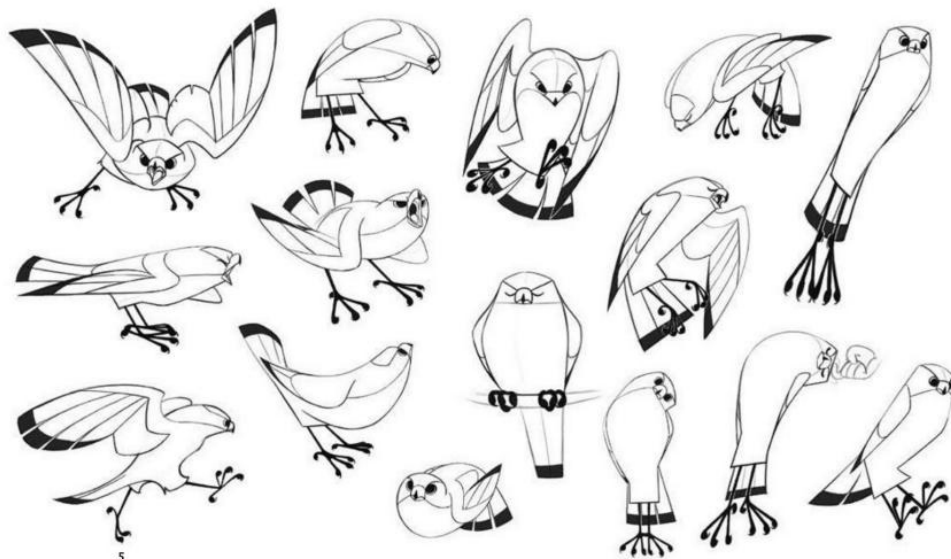
BILL

"Bill seems a decent chap, other than that he's in Cromwell's army. He has to do what he's told. He follows orders. He's a simple man. He becomes a good father when he discovers Robyn has her own life with her own dreams for the future. By the end, he realizes she's an intelligent young woman."

SEAN BEAN,
VOICE OF BILL

The artists experiment with different features and postures to suggest Bill's personality.

LEFT *Although minimal and stylized, this preliminary study conveys Bill's strength and presence. Artist: Jean Baptiste Vendamme.*

ABOVE *Artist: Ross Stewart.*

1 *Two studies for Bill's face. Artist: Arina Korczynski.*

2 *Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

3–4 *Two pencil studies by Federico Pirovano.*

5 *Ross Stewarts's sketch suggests the relationship between the hunter and his son, Robyn.*

6 *Artist: Louise Bagnall.*

7 *Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

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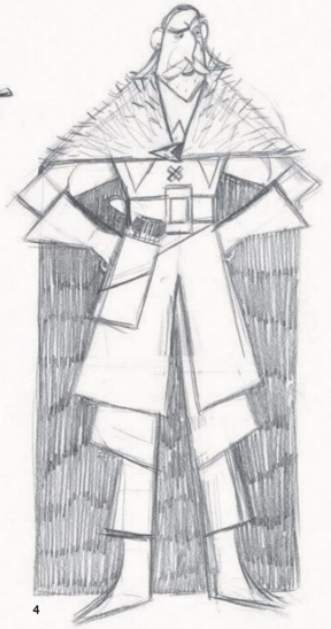
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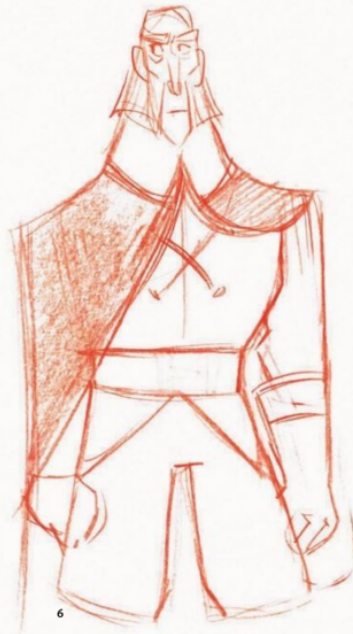
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In these sketches, Federico Pirovano explores
shapes and proportions in search of a design that
will be attractive yet easy to animate.

1 Three stages of this study by Friedrich Schäper
show how the artist builds atmosphere and mood.

2 Tomm Moore's painting reflects the style of
seventeenth-century portraiture.

1

William Goodfellow
16 45

2

1

2

3

1 Two moods of a stern-looking Bill. Artist: Tomm Moore.

2 Two exaggerated poses indicate how the character could appear villainous.

3 This study indicates the relative sizes of Bill, Robyn, and Merlyn. Artist: Tomm Moore.

4 An eerie image of Bill and Robyn hunting wolves by night. Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.

5 Exploring Bill's expressions. Artist: Tomm Moore.

4

5

1

2

3

BILL *with cloak*

BILL *with hood up*

BILL *with hat*

BILL *soldier*

BILL *in pijamas*

RED CHEEKS, NOSE,
TOP EARS, FINGERS
blur 4, 0 if it's far, 9, 0 if it's close
multiplying 10%, if it's far, 10%, if it's close
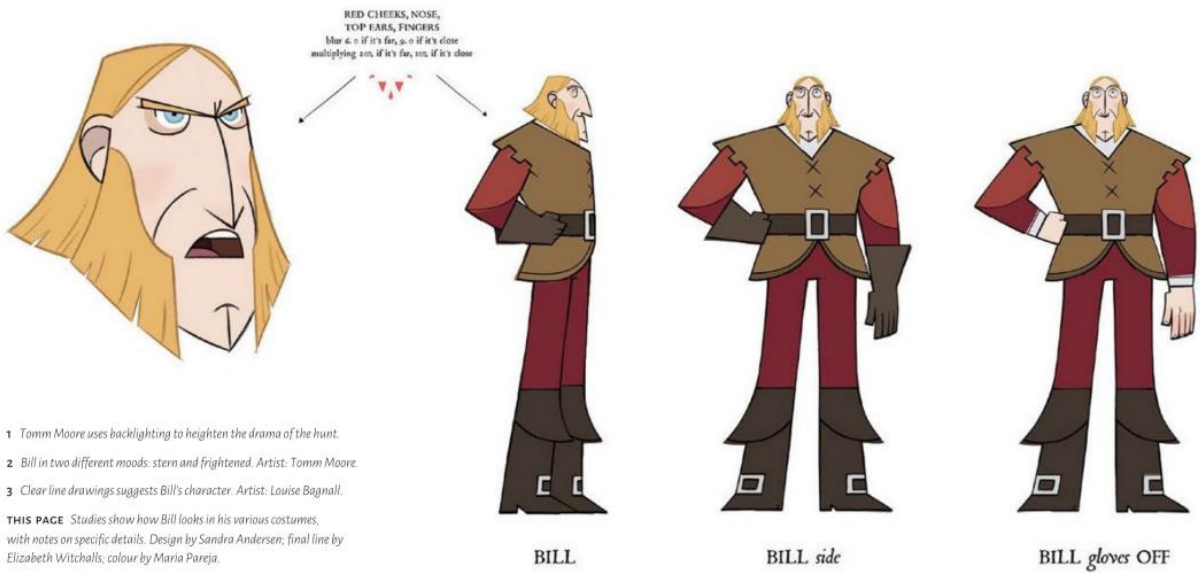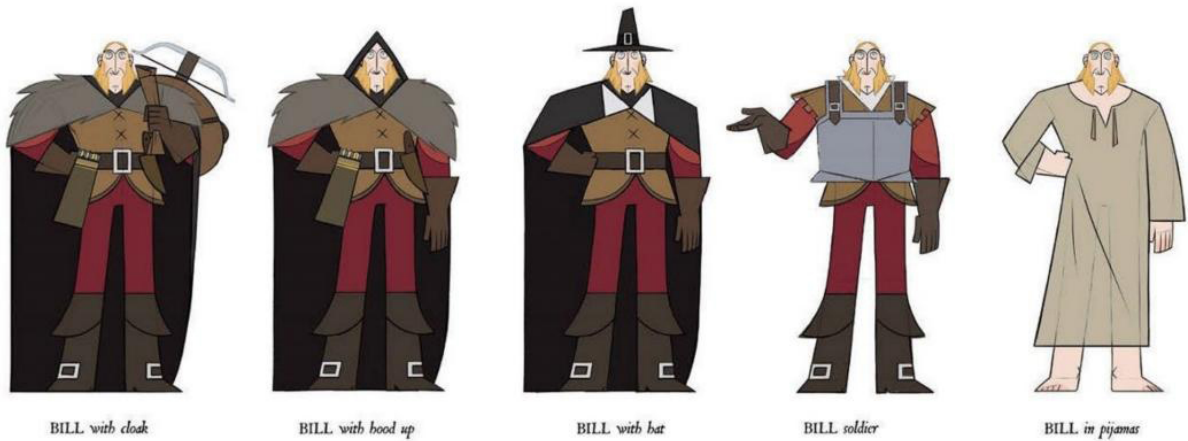
1 Tomm Moore uses backlighting to heighten the drama of the hunt.

2 Bill in two different moods: stern and frightened. Artist: Tomm Moore.

3 Clear line drawings suggests Bill's character. Artist: Louise Bagnall.

THIS PAGE *Studies show how Bill looks in his various costumes,
with notes on specific details. Design by Sandra Andersen; final line by
Elizabeth Witchalls; colour by Maria Pareja.*

BILL

BILL *side*

BILL *gloves* OFF
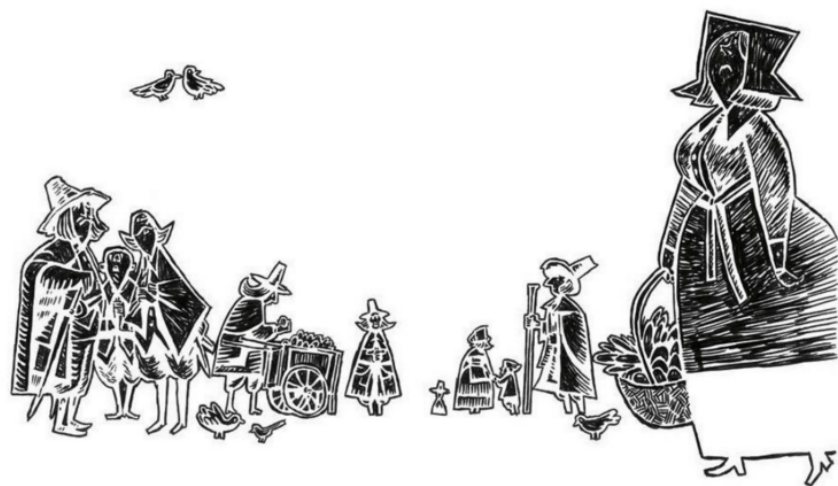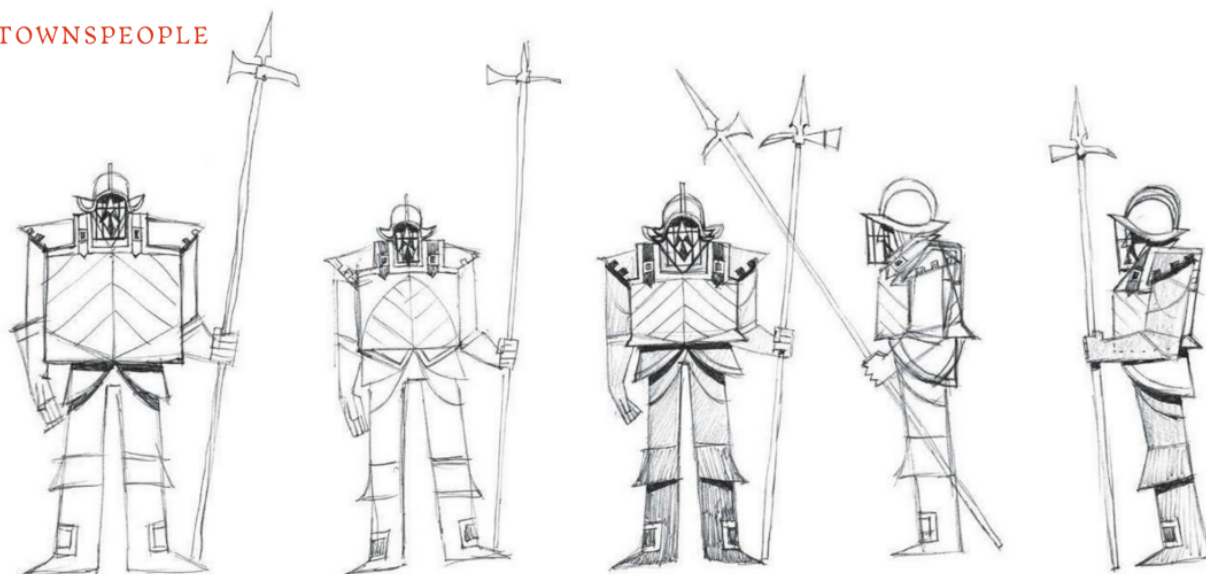
TOWNSPEOPLE

ABOVE *Ross Stewart explores variations on a design for Cromwell's soldiers.*

LEFT *A study of the townspeople suggests a rubbing of an old plaque. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

OPPOSITE *These studies show the costumes For the better-off citizens of seventeenth-century Kilkenny. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

PURITAN (women) DRESS
in general the bonnet will be the light colours,
but we can have some dark ones too.

TRAVELLER (women) DRESS
slightly more saturated colours. We don't have
much of this, for 10 puritans 1 traveller. This ones
will make Mebh colours match with the rest.

PURITAN (men) SUIT
in general very desaturated colours and dark cloaks
we have the saturation in the hairs

FARMERS CLOTHES
All in earth colours. Sleeves in light colours
to imply light shirts, jackets in browns.
More "tanned" skin

TRAVELLER (men) CLOTHES
slightly more saturated colours. We don't have
much of this, for 10 puritans 1 traveller. This ones
will make Mebh colours match with the rest.

SKIN COLOUR

HAIR COLOUR

OPPOSITE AND LEFT *Federico Pirovano's
sketches of the townspeople stress the
individuality of each character.*

ABOVE *Notes on the colours and shapes in
final designs. Artist: Maria Pareja.*

Early studies for the street kids Robyn encounters in Kilkenny.

ABOVE *Drawing by Tomm Moore; colour by Ross Stewart.*

RIGHT *Artist: Arina Korczynski.*

OPPOSITE TOP *Artist: Louise Bagnall.*

OPPOSITE BOTTOM *The final lineup. Line by Federico Pirovano; colour by Maria Pareja.*
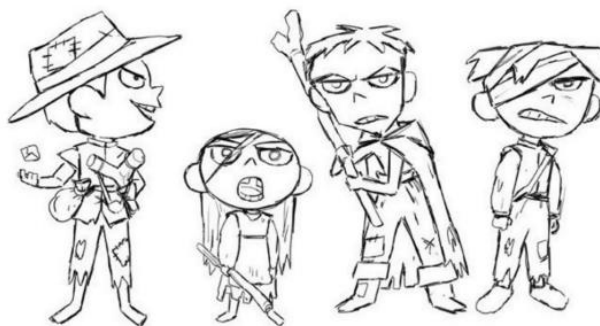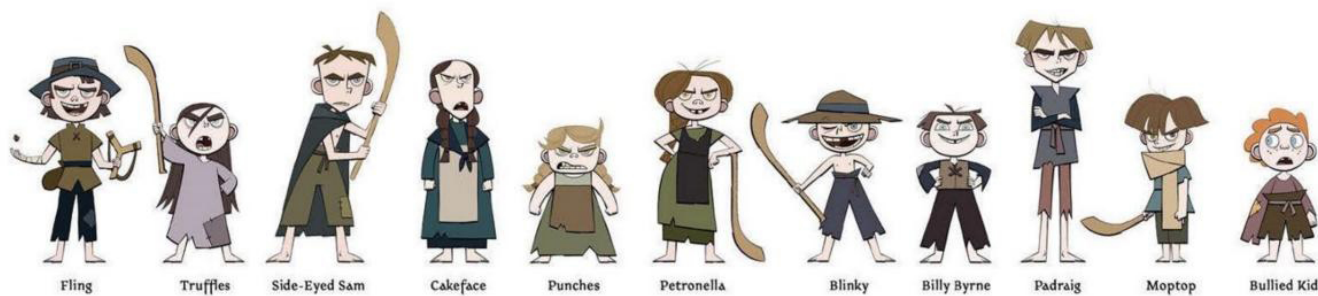
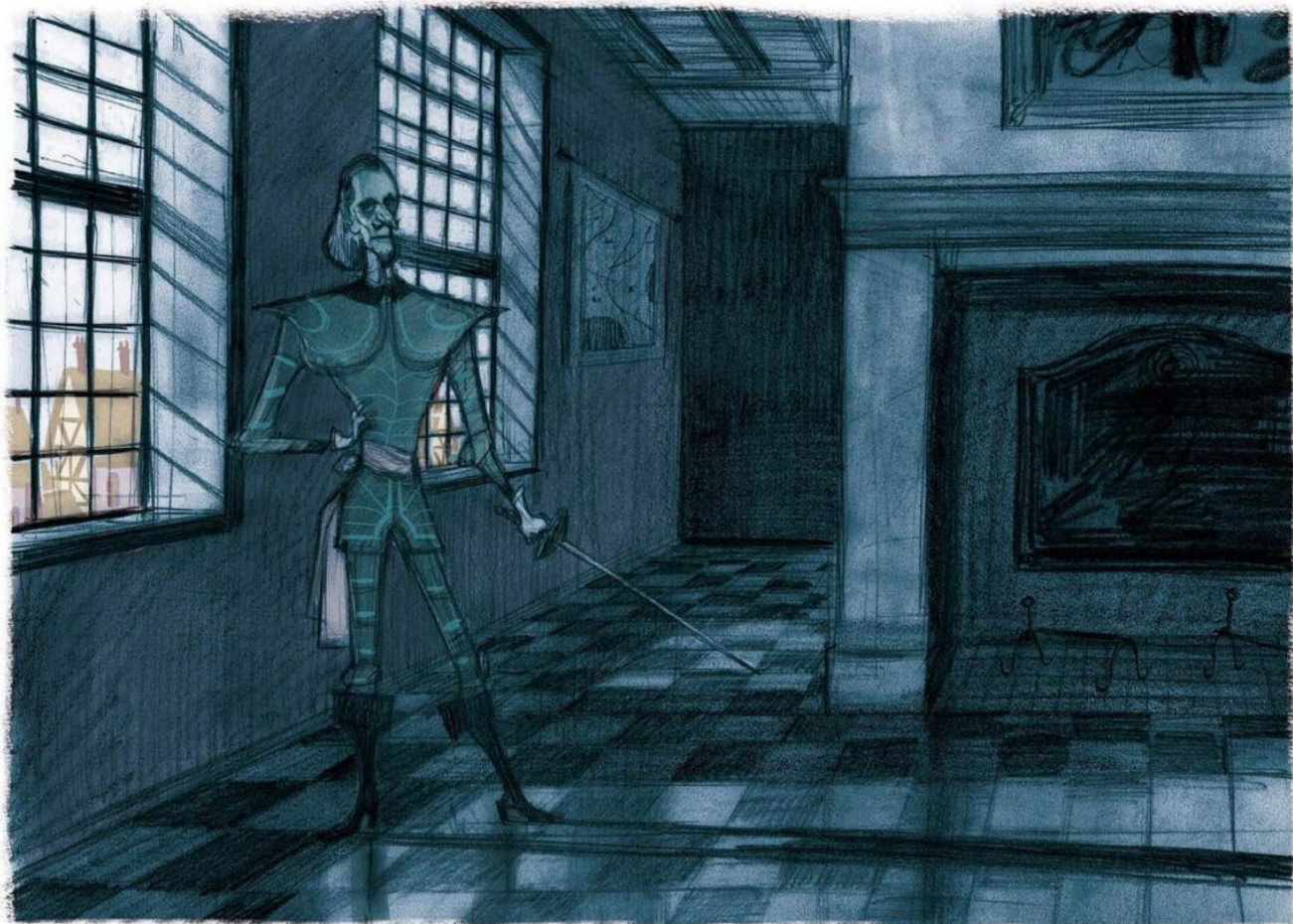Fling Truffles Side-Eyed Sam Cakeface Punches Petronella Blinky Billy Byrne Padraig Moptop Bullied Kid

The design for the Lord Protector required the artists to balance the historic figure of Oliver Cromwell with the fictionalized character.

OPPOSITE *Cyril Pedrosa imagined a tall, lean warrior who recalls Don Quixote.*

THIS PAGE *Ross Stewart explores possible designs for the character in these stylized sketches.*

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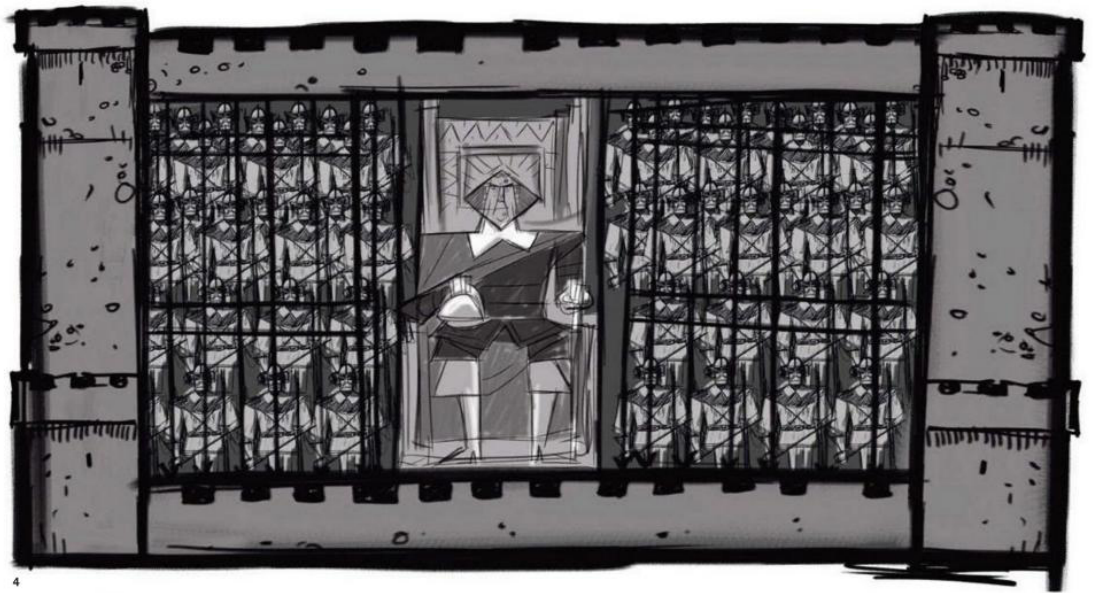
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1–2 Two studies suggest an angry, even priggish character. Artist: Ross Stewart.

3 Ross Stewart's watercolour suggests the clean lines and angles of mid-century graphics.

4 In contrast, this image suggests the Protector's secular authority. Artist: Tomm Moore.

5 Early studies for the Lord Protector's assault on the wolves stress the dramatic light and shadows of the Irish night. Artist: Tomm Moore.

6 Drawing by Tomm Moore; colour by Miki Montlló.

6
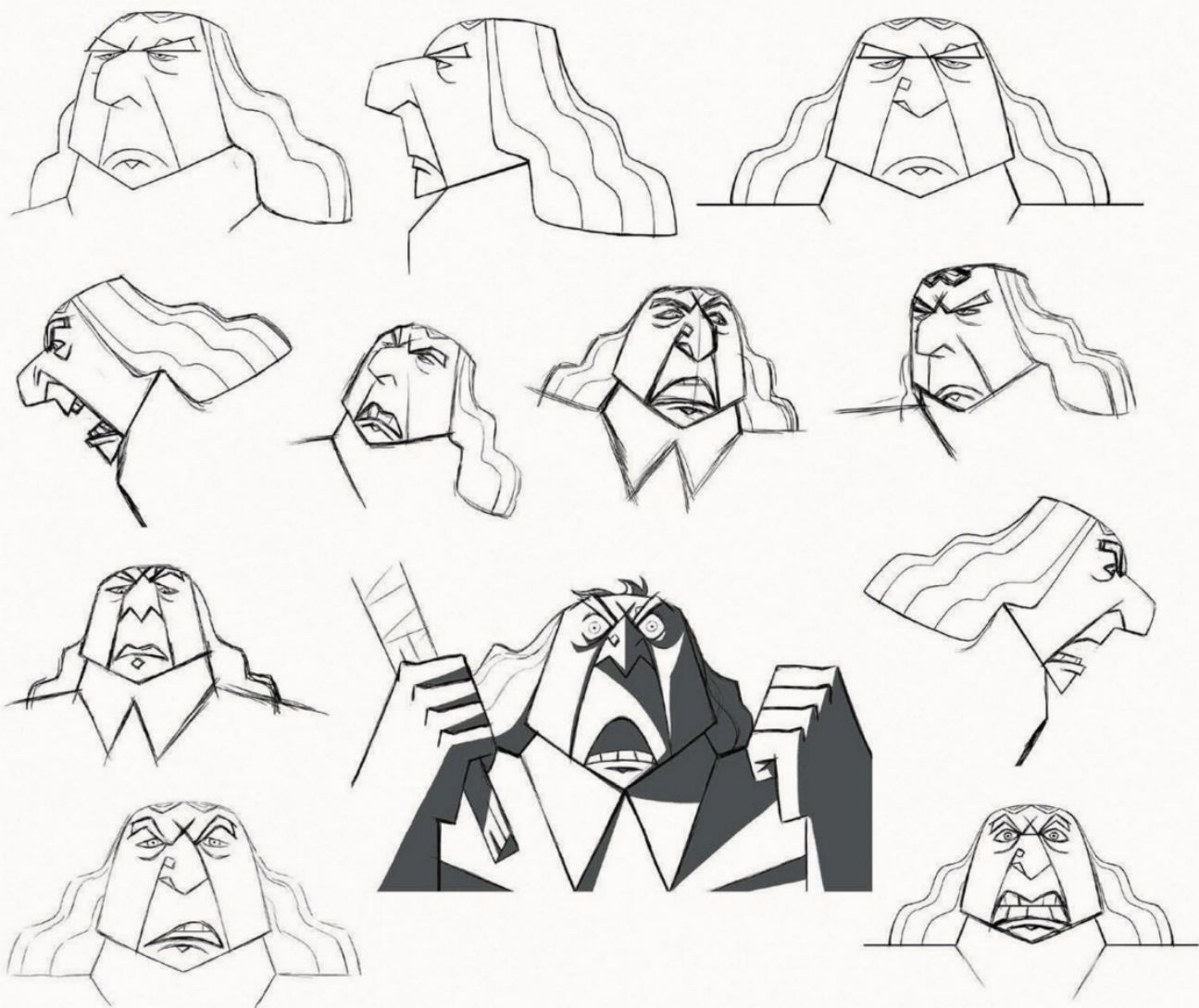
OPPOSITE *Artist: Federico Pirovano's vivid sketches capture the Lord Protector's self-righteous anger.*

ABOVE *The Lord Protector leads his troops into the forest in this atmospheric study. Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.*

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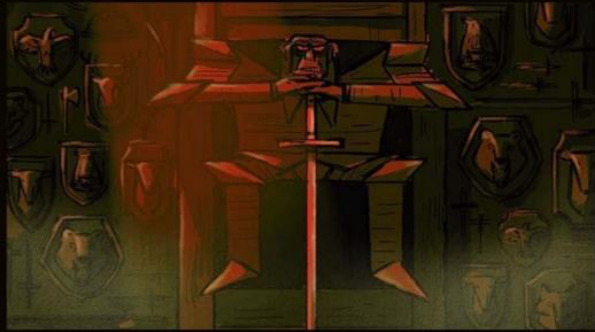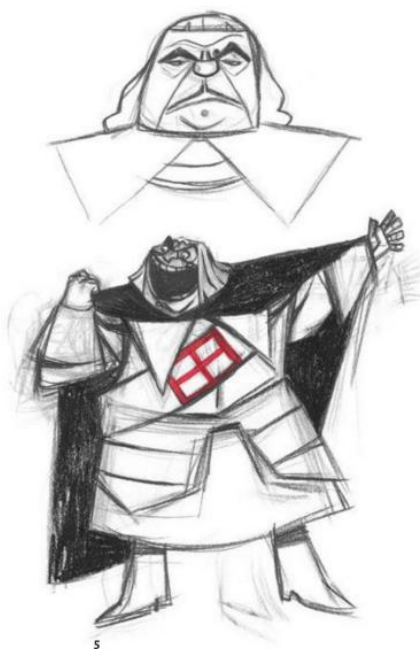
Although they use a similar palette, three artists take a different approach graphically to the Lord Protector.

1 *Flora Taverner stresses tenebristic lighting.*

2 *Arina Korczynski and Flora Taverner show a brooding, geometricized Lord Protector.*

3 *Ross Stewart uses boldly angular figures.*

4 *Pencil drawings in Arina Korczynski's sketchbook have an intimate feel.*

5 *Federico Pirovano depicts the Lord Protector declaiming loudly.*

6–8 *The rectilinear shapes reflect the Lord Protector's unbending self-assurance. Artist: Tomm Moore.*

6

7

8

MEBH

Mebh proved difficult to define visually. A shape-shifting, feral child, the contrast between her and the more proper Robyn had to be apparent in her design, as well as in her speech and movements.

1 Ross Stewart's early sketches emphasize her wild nature.

2 Paul Young's drawing of Mebh recalls a waif from Peter Pan's troupe.

3 Tomm Moore suggests her place within the wolf pack.

4 Artist: Ross Stewart.

5–6 The staring eyes and wild hair in these studies emphasize her links to the forest. Artist: Ross Stewart.

4

5

6

She doesn't like
to be human.
prefers to be
a wolf
she
emulate
the
tail
of wolf
with the tail
of her ponys
(squirrels etc.)

DARK LIPS
JUST LIKE
WOLVES?

1

2

Bread?

3

1 The spikes of hair on Arina Korczynski's Mebh have obviously never seen a brush.

2 Mebh's fur wrap emphasizes her links to animals who live by hunting. Artist: Ross Stewart.

3 The unruly curls on this version of Mebh suggest the human girl within the shape-shifting wolf. Artist: Jean Baptiste Vendamme.

4–6 Mebh feels like a solid if volatile girl in Federico Pirovano's pencil drawings.

7 An early exploration of how the character might be animated. Artist: Tomm Moore.

Meb'h seen by Robyn

Meb'h seen through the eyes of a wolf

Wears gauntlets

forehead mark only seen by wolves?

needs gauntlets
as she walks on
her hands too

fawnlike
fur
makes her
look younger

1

2

Louise Bagnall explores how the character might move her long hair.

1 *Federico Pirovano's studies suggest Mebh's appeal, as well as her wild nature.*

2—3 *Tomm Moore explores the patterns in Mebh's mane of red hair.*

3

As these sketches demonstrate, the rounded forms in Mebh's design provide an effective contrast to the more angular forms of the residents of Kilkenny, including Robyn.

THIS PAGE *Artist: Tomm Moore.*

1 *Characters by Tomm Moore; background by Miki Montlló.*

2 *Artist: Tomm Moore.*

3 *Artist: Camille Chao.*

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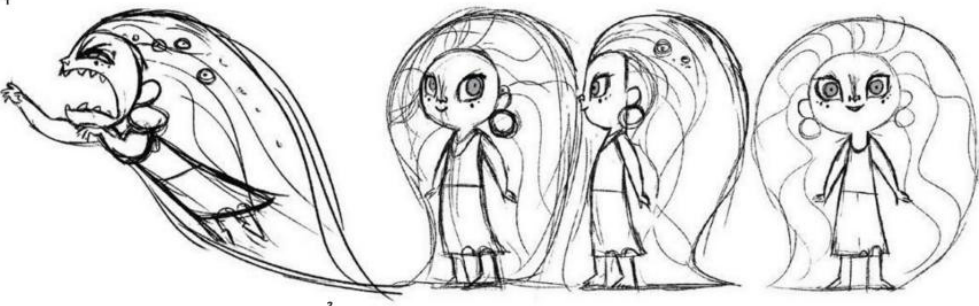
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OPPOSITE *Design by Sandra Andersen; final line by Elizabeth Witchalls; colour by Maria Pareja.*

1 *Robyn moves through the forest, unaware of being watched. Artist: Tomm Moore.*

2 *A lively pencil sketch of Robyn and Mebh by Ross Stewart.*

3 *Mebh playfully attacks the earlier, male version of Robyn. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

3

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just let me... fix it!

3
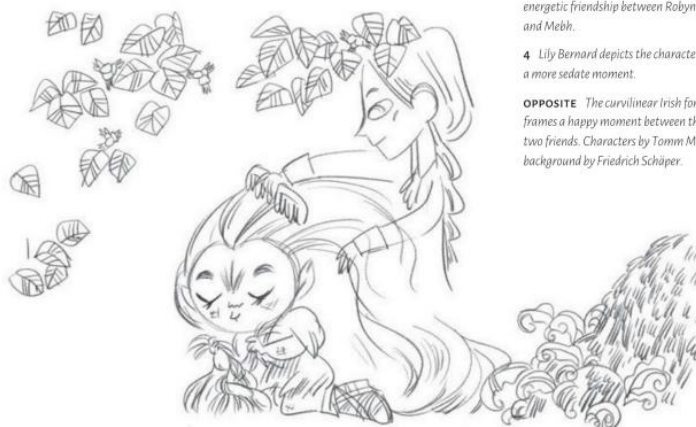
4

1–3 *Alice Dieudonné envisions a highly energetic friendship between Robyn and Mebh.*

4 *Lily Bernard depicts the characters in a more sedate moment.*

OPPOSITE *The curvilinear Irish forest frames a happy moment between the two friends. Characters by Tomm Moore; background by Friedrich Schäper.*
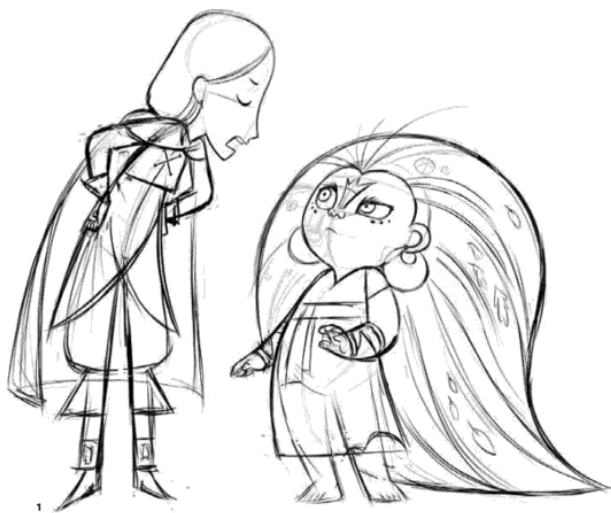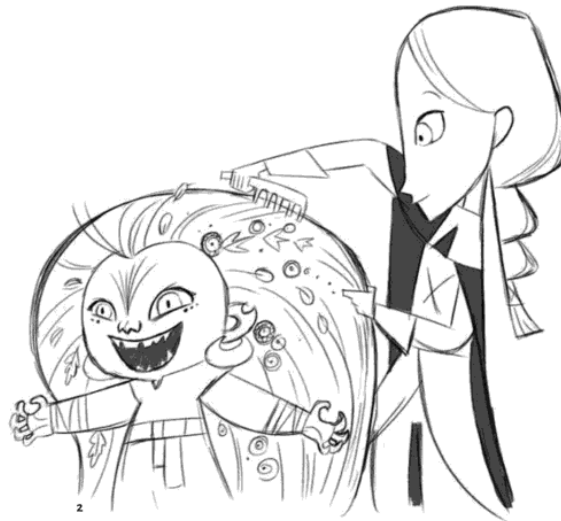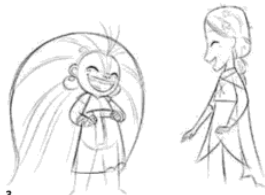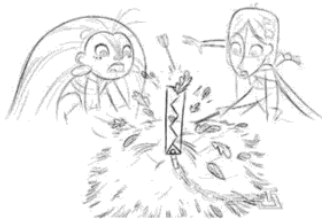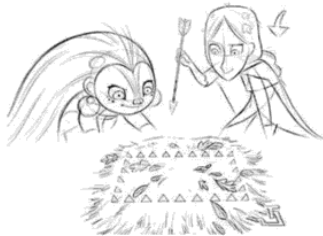
As the characters assume their final designs, their different personalities come into clearer focus.

1 Robyn gives Mebh some unwanted advice. Artist: Sandra Andersen.

2 And tries to comb her leaf-tangled locks. Artist: Tomm Moore.

3 Robyn springs a trap for Mebh, who pulls her off into some new adventure. Artist: Sandra Andersen.

OPPOSITE Mebh and Robyn join the wolves' serenade. Artists: Miki Montlló and Lily Bernard.

MOLL

Like Mebh, Moll had to be believable as both a human and a wolf. Also, the designs for Moll and Mebh needed to complement each other, so it would be clear to the audiences they were mother and daughter.

THIS PAGE These early sketches suggest a peasant woman. Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.

1–2 Ross Stewart explores a series of increasingly complex designs in these pencil sketches.

3–4 The more elegant Moll in these drawings reflects the influence of the mid-century UPA (United Productions of America) studio films. Artist: Tomm Moore.
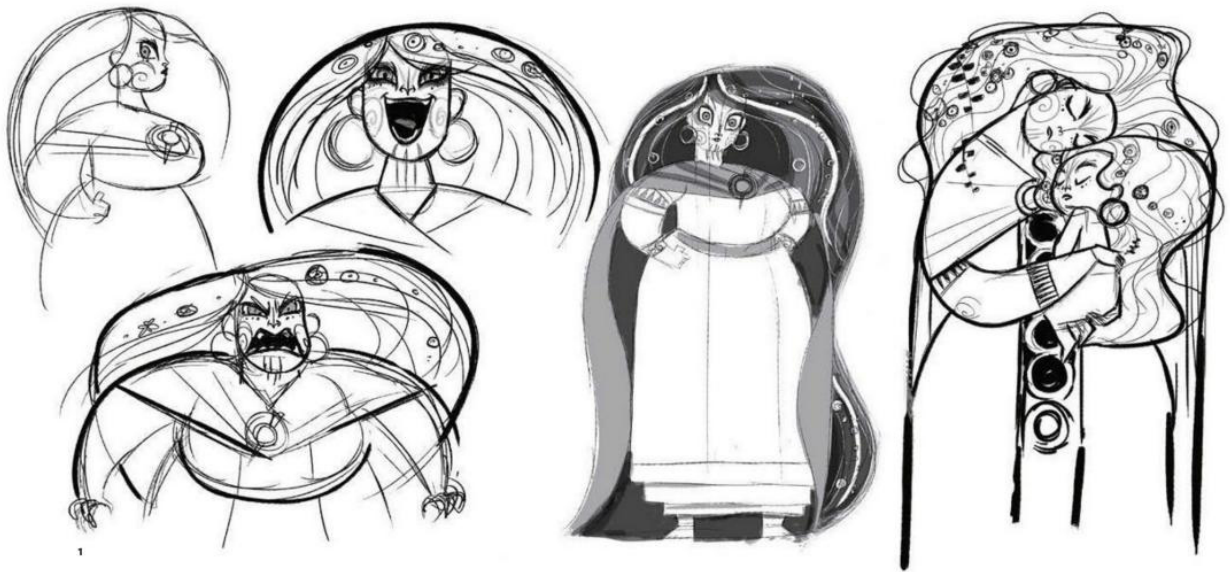
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THIS PAGE *In these sketches, an elaborately coiffed Moll lives in a traditional painted wagon. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

OPPOSITE *Federico Pirovano reveals the power Moll would command as head of the wolf pack.*

Moll as a character of many moods.

OPPOSITE *Federico Pirovano's drawings capture her strength and conviction.*

1 *Explorations of expressions and attitudes; the drawing on the far right recalls the work of Gustav Klimt. Artist: Tomm Moore.*

2 *Two loose coloured pencil sketches suggest Moll's vivacity. Artist: Louise Bagnall.*

3 *The ornaments and elaborate coiffure suggest a more elegant character. Artist: Camille Chao.*
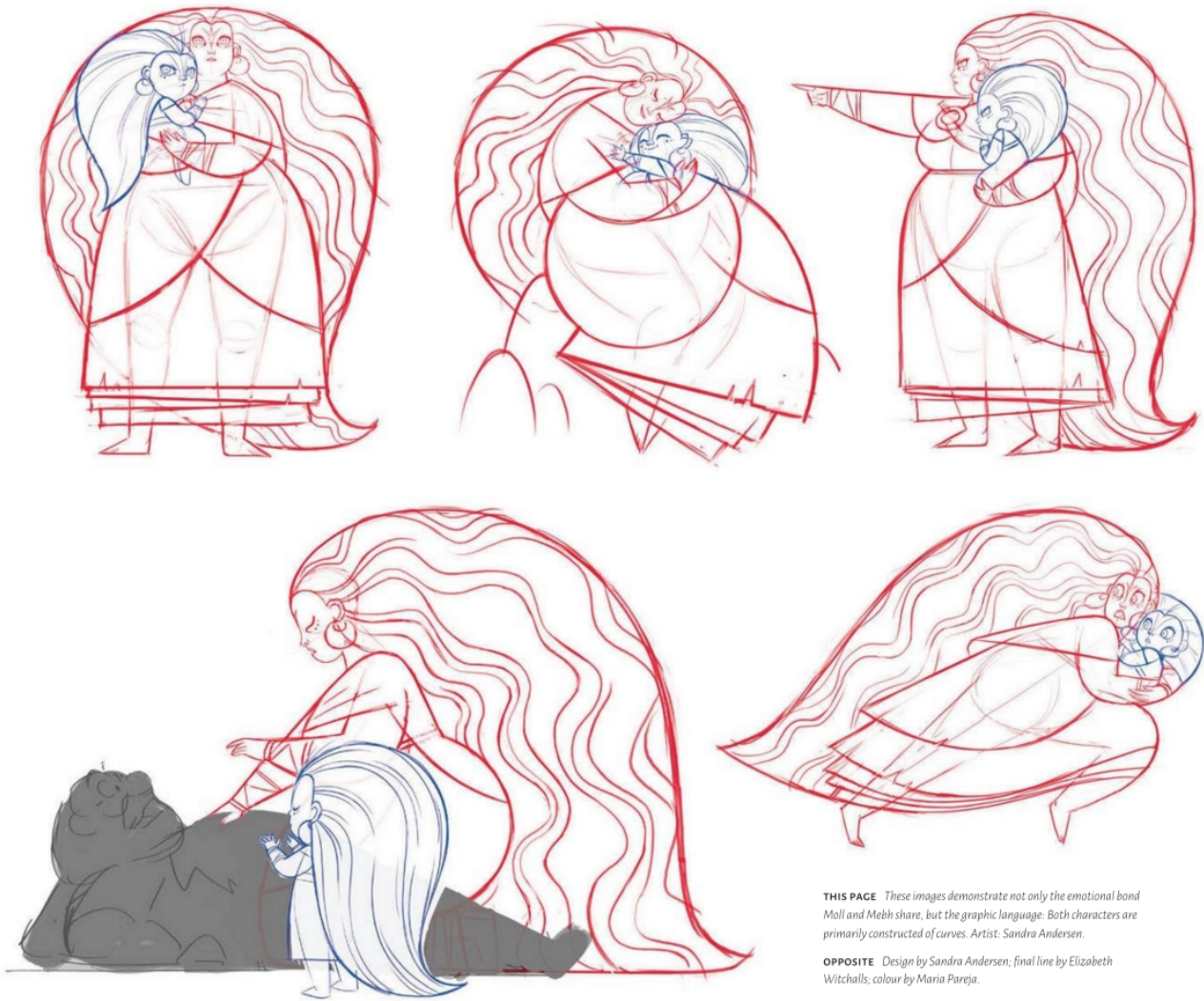
THIS PAGE *These images demonstrate not only the emotional bond Moll and Mebh share, but the graphic language: Both characters are primarily constructed of curves. Artist: Sandra Andersen.*

OPPOSITE *Design by Sandra Andersen; final line by Elizabeth Witchalls; colour by Maria Pareja.*
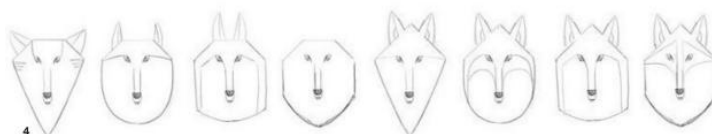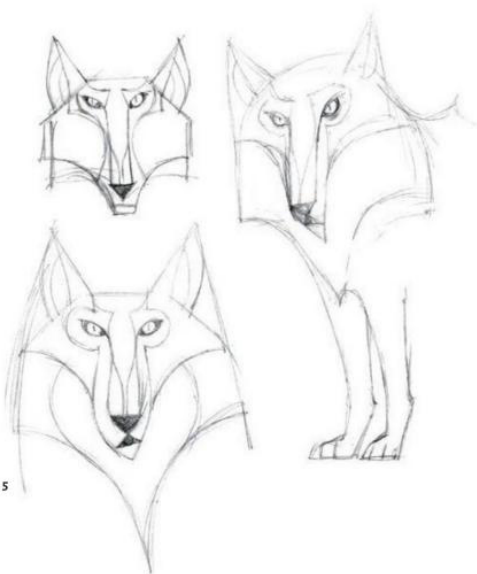
WOLVES

1 Tomm Moore's stylized portrait of a wolf captures the animal's innate dignity.

2 Pages from Arina Korczynski's sketchbook.

3 A quick but powerful sketch. Artist: Tomm Moore.

4 The artists explore how to simplify the complex forms that make up a wolf's head. Artist: Flora Taverner.

5 In contrast to the drawings directly above, these studies of a wolf's head have a faceted, geometric look. Artist: Ross Stewart.

OPPOSITE These drawings from Friedrich Schäper's sketchbook show how artists study animal anatomy and movement, then stylize it to suit the medium of animation.

tales indicate
emotion

tale up = confidence
tale btw. the legs = submission

Sketches by several artists illustrate different ways of seeing and stylizing a wolf's movements, poses, and anatomy.

1 *Eimhin McNamara's sketch captures the softness of the animal's pelt.*

2 *Tomm Moore's sketch is more angular and graphic.*

3 *The animals in these drawings by Flora Taverner are simplified but retain a canine feel.*

4 *The interlocking forms of Robyn and the wolf are graphically pleasing and suggest the bond between the characters. Artist: Tomm Moore.*
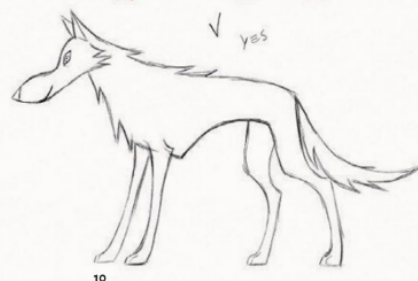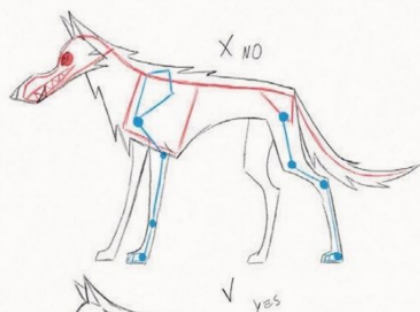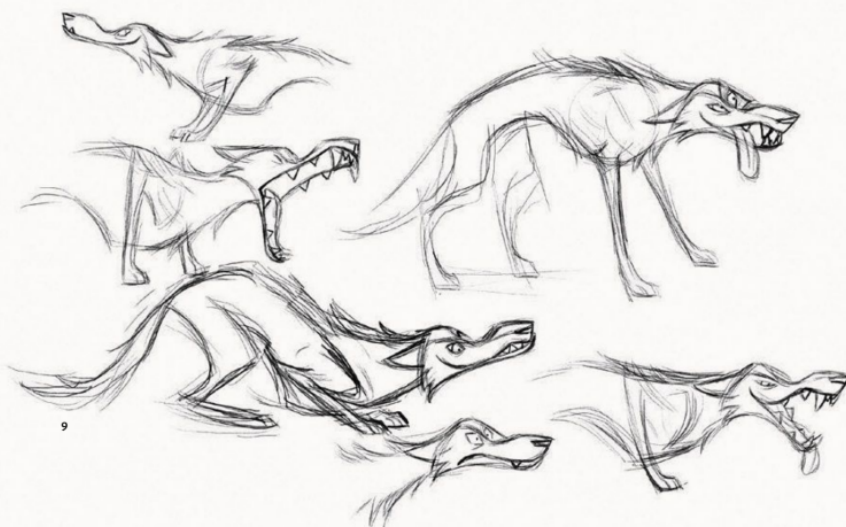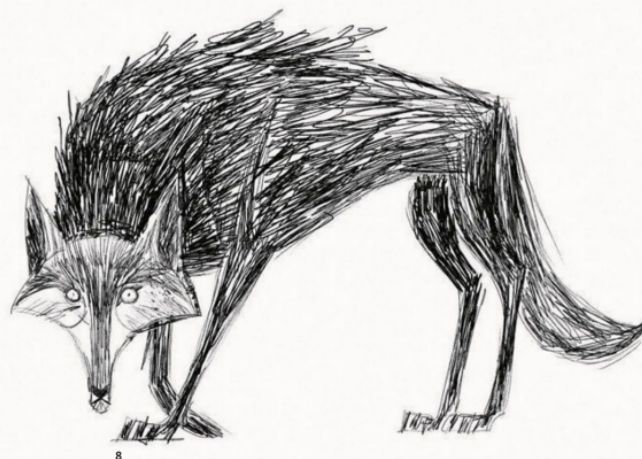
5 *This drawing suggests speed and movement. Artist: Federico Pirovano.*

6 *Friedrich Schäper's study of a wolf's posture is simple but clear.*

7 *These quick sketches capture the energy of a wolf's movements. Artist: Alice Dieudonné.*

8 *A simplified and stylized wolf. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

9–10 *These studies suggest ways of depicting movement, expressions, and anatomy in animation. Artist: Federico Pirovano.*

7

8

9

X NO

√ yes

10

X NO

V YES
FOLLOW THE FORM
BUT CHANGE SLIGHTLY
DIRECTION WITH
EVERY STROKE.

V YES
- SHADOW
- ENERGY
- DIFFERENT
  SPEEDS

X NO

7 NO

V YES

X NO
BREAK
THE LINE FEELS
BUT NOT EVENLY.

DRAW THE SHAPE
OF THE FLOW

FILL IT WITH
WITH THE
WOLVES

START RENDERING

V YES

X NO

V YES

THIS PAGE *After studying real wolves, Federico Pirovano simplifies their anatomy and movement in these lively sketches.*

OPPOSITE AND FOLLOWING SPREAD *Mebh and the wolves of the pack share a rambunctious moment. Artist: Federico Pirovano.*

ROBYN AS A WOLF

Mammies gonna kill me!

she bates like a fox

My father will tell us!

wolf roby
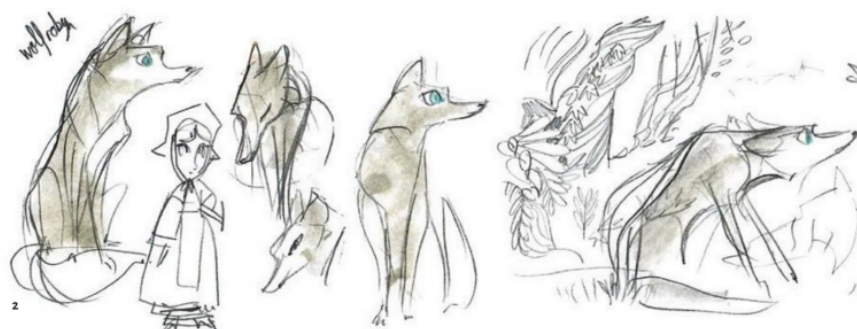
For the story of the film to work, main characters had to express the same personalities in their human and animal forms.

1–2 Alice Dieudonné suggests the characters' body languages in various moods.

3 Federico Pirovano explores expressions and body language that convey Robyn's behavior in her new body.
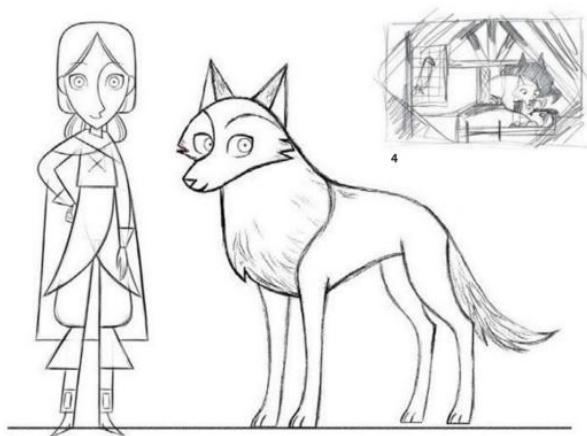
4 Preliminary sketch of Robyn's transition. Artist: Tomm Moore.

5 The relative sizes of Robyn's two forms. Design by Sandra Andersen and Federico Pirovano.

6 After traveling the countryside as a wolf, Robyn's spirit returns to her body. Artist: Flora Taverner.
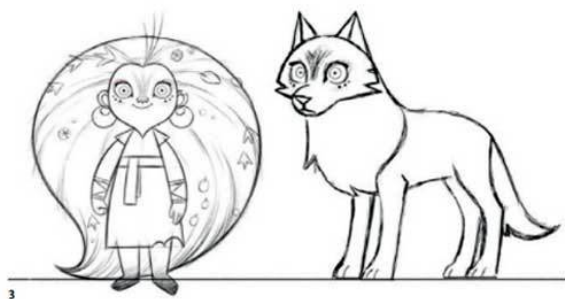
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6

MEBH AS A WOLF

1

2

3

wolf mebh

4
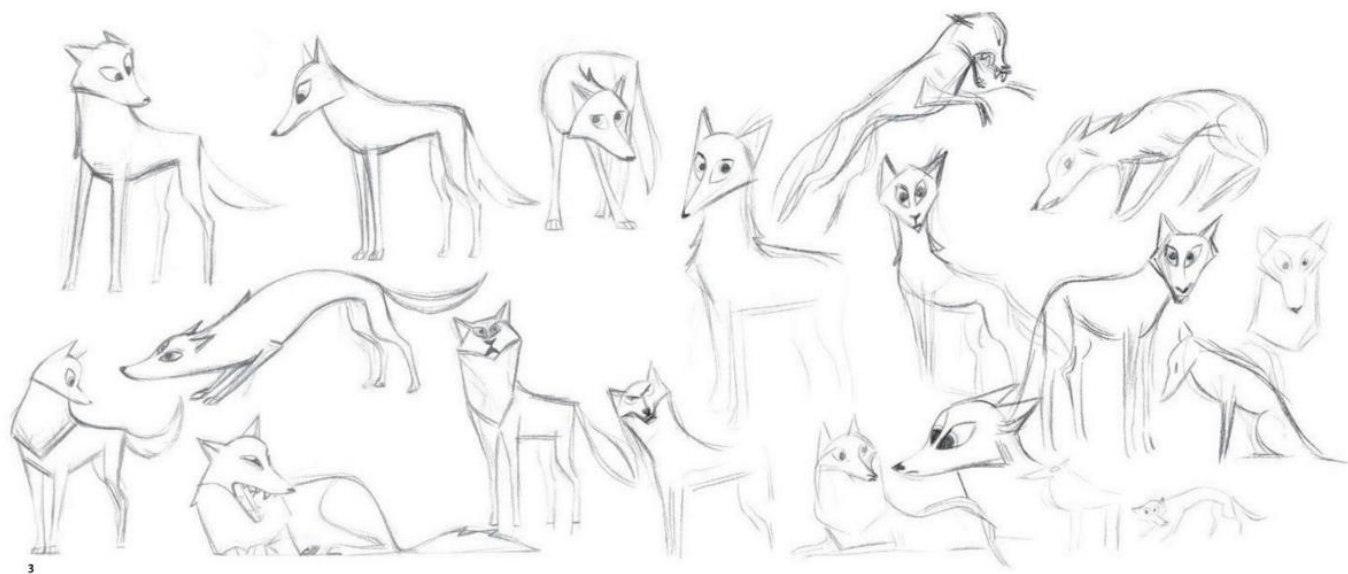
OPPOSITE *A magical moment: Robyn's spirit returns to her body. Characters by Anita Caughan; backgrounds by various artists.*

THIS PAGE *The artists clearly enjoy imagining Mebh's ebullient moods.*

1 *In Arina Korczynski's drawings, Mebh is as untidy as a wolf as she is as a human.*

2 *Federico Pirovano's drawings of Mebh as a wolf already feel animated.*

3 *The relative sizes of Mebh's two forms. Design by Sandra Andersen and Federico Pirovano.*

4 *Alice Dieudonné explores adapting human expressions to a wolf's face.*

MOLL AS A WOLF

SHAPE OF A WOLF !

1

2

3

4

BILL AS A WOLF

5

6

7

8

1 *Arina Korczynski suggests the mother-daughter bond between Moll and Mebh through their interlocking forms.*

**2** *Alice Dieudonné examines canine body language and expressions.*

3 *Tomm Moore shows a dramatic moment for Robyn, Mebh, and Moll.*

4 *The relative sizes of Moll's two forms. Design by Sandra Andersen and Federico Pirovano.*

5–6 *These studies of Bill as a wolf emphasize the more geometrized design of his face. Artist: Federico Pirovano.*

7 *These rough drawings suggest the power Bill would possess as a wolf. Artist: Alice Dieudonné.*

8 *The relative sizes of Bill's two forms. Design by Sandra Andersen and Federico Pirovano.*
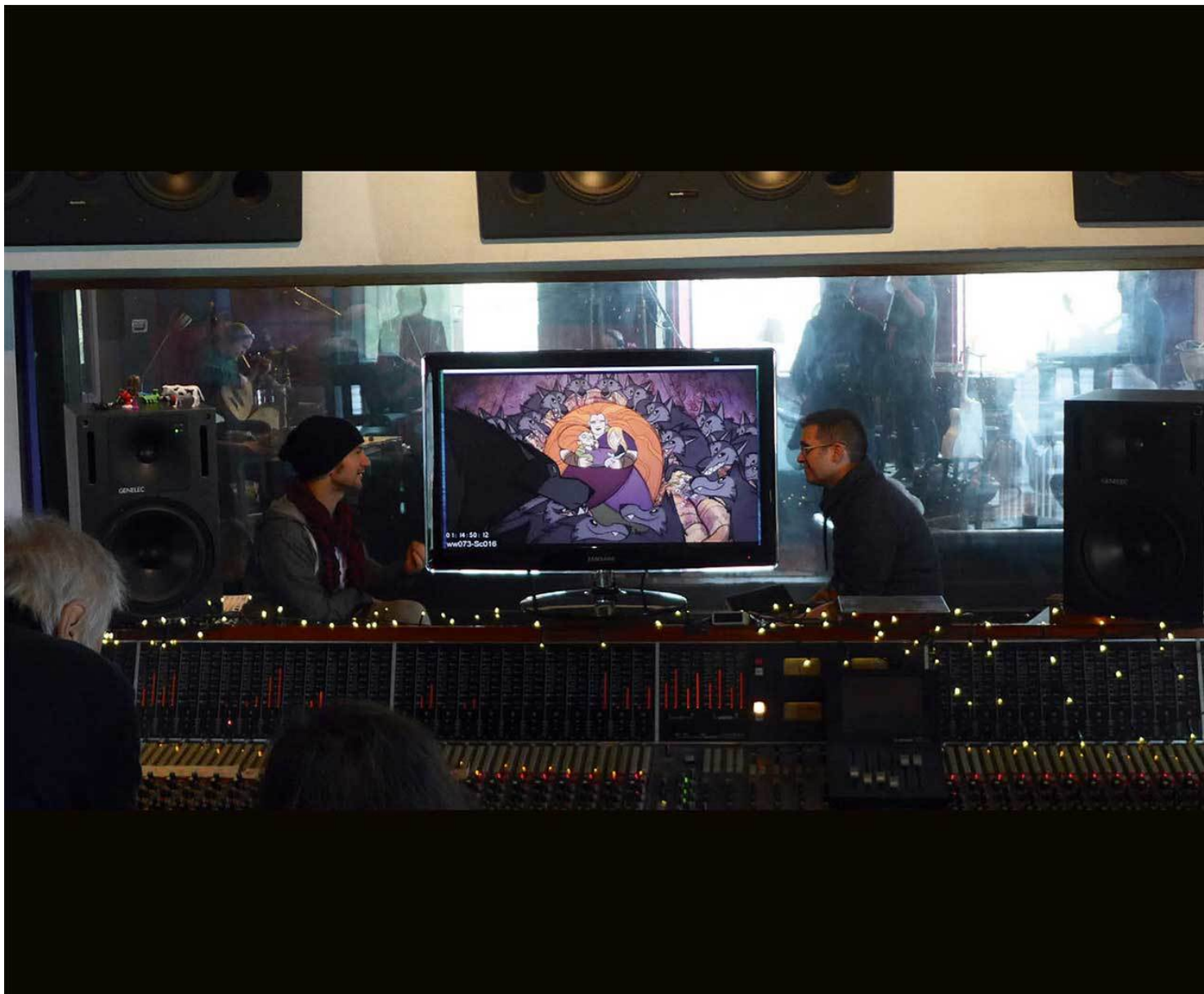
iv. Direction

The director of an animated feature must possess the tact of an ambassador, a miniaturist's eye for detail, the endurance of a marathon runner, a general's ability to rally the troops, and the patience of Job. A director must also be able to envision the finished film while examining not only isolated scenes and sequences, but also individual paintings and drawings—much as a conductor hears the entire opera while discussing single notes with the performers.

When he began to develop *WolfWalkers*, Tomm Moore was already an established director who had earned Oscar nominations and festival prizes for *The Secret of Kells* (2009) and *Song of the Sea* (2014). Ross Stewart had served as art director on *Kells* and contributed to the designs for *Song of the Sea* and Laika's *ParaNorman* (2012). The two men had shared the direction of Cartoon Saloon's sequence in *The Prophet* (2014), based on the poetry of Kahlil Gibran. They wanted to continue working together.

In addition to being a director, Moore was a partner in Cartoon Saloon with Paul Young and Nora Twomey. They had built a studio where they could offer each other honest criticism without trying to impose their vision on each other's films.

"I've learned how to give notes not as a director, but as an encourager: That's a different set of notes," Twomey explains. "We try to empower, rather than criticize. That comes from years of working together and supporting each other through thick and thin. It's such an easy thing to give notes and feedback on somebody else's work. But if Tomm thinks something's working, I'm pretty sure it is."

"If you have directors who are confident and know they have the final say, they're more relaxed when they listen to all the feedback on an animatic," adds Young. "We do our films reasonably quickly. We might spend three to four years developing an idea. When the two-year production schedule begins, it's after the animatic has been worked on for almost a year and a half."

WolfWalkers spent many months in development before Moore and Stewart felt it was ready to move into production.

"On *Song of the Sea*, we had an overall story, but there was a huge amount to work out: [screenwriter] Will Collins did a lot of drafts," Moore says. "On *WolfWalkers*, because it was me and Ross and Will, we had more meetings. Ross and I would do thumbnail sketches and figure out a sequence, talk to Will, then he'd work it into the script. There was a lot of back-and-forth, even after the first pass of storyboarding. Whenever we got heavy notes, Will got involved again."

Although most live-action features have a single director, many animated features have two or even three. There's simply too much work for one person to supervise it all. Some directing teams divide the film by sequence; others focus on the aspects of production they know best.

"When we started development and scriptwriting, it was only the two of us and Will," Stewart recalls. "We had our own little room, and for a couple of years, we put up drawings that we liked and developed the idea that way. When it got into scene illustration and pre-production, Tomm naturally tended toward character design and I tended toward background design. We both supervised the storyboards.

"As production loomed, it became obvious that Tomm should focus on character and animation, and I would focus on background, layout, and line effects," he continues. "So most of my day was spent with layout and outline and colour backgrounds; most of Tomm's was spent with posing and character animation. Once some of those departments' work started to taper off, we both focused on effects and character animation."

Moore and Stewart could also delegate some duties to their assistant director, Mark Mullery. "I worked as an animator with some other companies here in Ireland. When you start with really small companies, you end up doing a bit of everything," Mullery

explains. "When I came to Cartoon Saloon, I ended up being technical director on *Puffin Rock* and *The Breadwinner*. It feels natural to me to be the assistant director on *WolfWalkers* because it essentially involves the same duties. I know how the sausage is made and how to make the calls.

"I always try to dive between Tomm and Ross and oncoming trouble of any kind," he continues. "Any problem that's cross-departmental, I handle. I think of myself as being a bit of connective tissue between the left and right hemispheres."

All three men worked closely with the editors. In recent years, editors have played a more significant role, helping the directors to shape the animatic and, ultimately, the film.

"Two directors is a challenge, but it's also a blessing," says editor Richard Cody. "Having two directors allowed me a lot more freedom and a lot more of a voice. When the directors had different ideas about a sequence, I'd often be the deciding vote. But it also meant that certain decisions weren't as clear-cut. If there's one director in the room, he could have a positive response to something you show him. You work from that response, but the other director might have a negative response to the same material."

Pixar director Pete Docter observed that sometimes the reason a scene in an animated feature isn't working isn't the scene itself, but that it wasn't set up properly earlier in the film. Or that it wasn't getting the payoff it needed later in the film.

"On *WolfWalkers* I was still very much finding my feet: what I was able to do and how much I could bring to the table," Cody continues. "But toward the end of that process, there were certain board artists I would bring in and talk to about the sequence, and really hammer it out. I'd give my view on what I thought it needed, and they'd give theirs. Other board artists preferred to work in a more structured way, where notes would come through the directors. It depends on the artist, on the team, and on the stage of the animatic."

"I edited *Song of the Sea* and *The Breadwinner*; Ross and Tomm are good friends of mine," comments Darragh Byrne. "You can be honest and straightforward about what works and what doesn't. As an editor, you're picking out the best ideas and helping them mold the film. With Tomm and Ross, you can tell it like it is—and they can tell you what they don't like about the edits. I knew I could trust them to come up with great ideas.

"You assume a Cartoon Saloon film is going to look amazing because you see all the concept art: the incredible character designs and fantastic backgrounds," he adds. "But as editor, I stay focused on making sure the story is clearly told and the characters are engaging. No matter how pretty it is, it still has to make people feel something."

"When you're in the city, you're in this pure geometric space; when you're in the forest, it's far more organic: all beautiful compositions," agrees Mullery. "But you have a story to tell. There's a crossbow on the ground someone needs to see, so we need to call attention to it. We need a cutaway or a reverse shot and a close-up."

Some of the animation was done by artists at Studio 352 in Luxembourg and Fost Studio in Paris, who had worked on the previous Cartoon Saloon features. To ensure these artists felt they were genuinely part of the crew and not outsiders, the filmmakers invited the supervisors to spend time with them in Kilkenny before work began.
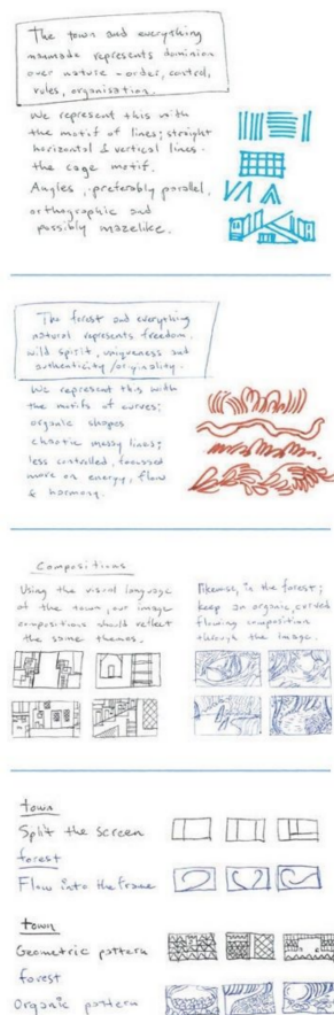
"Early in fall of 2018, we went to Kilkenny for two weeks, just to be part of the crew for a little while, to talk with Tomm and Ross and Svend [Rothmann Bonde, rough animation supervisor] and the other department heads," says Nicolas Debray, animation supervisor at Studio 352. "A supervisor is usually just a communications person, who passes information from the crew to the director and from the director to the crew. But Tomm was really open to getting our ideas and seeing what we could bring to the animation. By checking his ego at the door, he gets the best from the artists who work for him, which is remarkable and rare."

"I went to Kilkenny for two weeks to meet everybody and see Cartoon Saloon's process," adds Fost Studio animation supervisor Jeanne-Sylvette Giraud. "The animation was just beginning on the first sequence. They had meetings with the animators to talk about the characters' psychology and evolution in each sequence."

Moore stresses that an animation director must always be patient—and tactful. Many animators like to describe their art form as "the Island of Misfit Toys" (a reference to the 1964 TV special *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*), but even self-proclaimed misfits have egos and sensitivities.

"You have to be patient and realize everyone hasn't been eating and drinking and breathing and sleeping the story quite as long as you have," he says. "You have to be ready to go back to the first references from three years ago and rediscover them with the crew. Show them what you're going for and why to get them on board. It's so easy to forget that for them, it's not as deeply ingrained as it is for you, the director."

The Cartoon Saloon artists were hard at work on *WolfWalkers* in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. On March 12, the Irish government closed schools and cancelled festivities; twelve days later, the order to shut down came.

The town and everything manmade represents dominion over nature – order, control, rules, organisation.

We represent this with the motif of lines; straight horizontal & vertical lines – the cage motif. Angles, preferably parallel, orthographic and possibly mazelike.

The forest and everything natural represents freedom, wild spirit, uniqueness and authenticity/originality.

We represent this with the motifs of curves; organic shapes, chaotic messy lines; less controlled, focussed more on energy, flow & harmony.

Compositions

Using the visual language of the town, our image compositions should reflect the same themes.

Likewise, in the forest; keep an organic, curved flowing composition through the image.

town — Split the screen
forest — Flow into the frame

town — Geometric pattern
forest — Organic pattern

> "Ultimately, you have to have somebody who has the final vision, and Tomm and Ross do together. You can have writers, storyboarders, and editors: They'll give amazing feedback and help. But really it falls to the directors to see the film through."
>
> PAUL YOUNG, PRODUCER

OPPOSITE *Ross Stewart's clearly illustrated notes explain how he wants the artists to handle a scene.*

ABOVE *The staff of Cartoon Saloon at the* WolfWalkers *summer party.*

"I went in on Sunday to take my computer home: I looked around the office and felt like crying," Moore recalls. "I had taken going in to the office to work for granted—almost to the point of complaining about it. But I knew I was going to miss the camaraderie of the people I'd see every day."

"We were finishing up effects and still doing ink and paint and compositing," adds Stewart. "The effects and ink and paint crews could work from home easily enough. The big worry was compositing, because they're all working in Nuke. Their home computers don't have the licenses and wouldn't be able to handle the strain."

Fortunately, the film was nearing completion when the disease struck. "We benefited from the fact that we were so late in production," says Moore. "Luckily, we'd recorded the orchestra and the Irish folk band Kíla weeks before the lockdown: I don't know how we would have worked around that."

"If this had happened early in the production, when we were doing layout, rough animation, and posing, I wonder if we'd have been able to finish: Those stages require a lot more one-on-one," Stewart says. "We've adapted pretty well out of necessity. But it was really nice to be able to do a little drawing and explain directly to someone exactly what you wanted. Now everything has to be sent by Skype or e-mail, then we talk about it."

"You have to consider if you want to make any changes because it means another round of sending things back and forth," agrees Moore. "That quick and easy collaboration in the same room is what's missing. We extended the schedule by about six weeks to make up for the delays."

Cartoon Saloon has always been a friendly place with a vibrant esprit de corps. The filmmakers worry that spirit may change. Stewart says sadly, "When DIP finished, we couldn't even gather together, have a few beers and pizza, and say thank-you to the crew. We had to send an email, 'Thanks very much. We hope we'll see you for a premiere.'"

"We've had a lot of meetings about how this is going to change the studio," Moore says. "When we can open up again, we won't probably have a crew room or a shared coffee machine—places where you meet people you might not meet otherwise. We may keep doing show-and-tells, where people from different projects show a bit of their work on Zoom to maintain that connection between people.

"Our plan was to have everybody in one building by 2025," he concludes. "But even if they find a vaccine in the next year and everybody can come back, people may want to work from home more. Maybe that will be possible. It's going to change the culture of the studio."

v. Design

OPPOSITE *The dark palette of red, gray, and black heightens the drama in this sketch of the Lord Protector's headquarters. Artist: Alice Dieudonné.*

Although 3-D computer animation has become the dominant form of studio animation, Cartoon Saloon has built an international reputation on its hand-drawn films. Its characters and settings reflect a wide range of influences, from the films of UPA and Genndy Tartakovsky to Picasso and a host of artists and illustrators reaching back to the illuminators of the ninth-century Book of Kells.

WolfWalkers producer Nora Twomey sums up the attitude at Cartoon Saloon when she says, "I trust draw-ers, people who use it as a method of communication. If you're in a meeting with Tomm, you have to be careful of your posture and what angle you're presenting, because he's going to be drawing you. Paul will be, too. In school we're taught if you're doodling, you're not paying attention, but people who draw as a method of understanding the world around them do it constantly. They're listening hard, but they're also doodling away, as Tomm and Paul do."

For the key role of production designer, Moore and Stewart chose Spanish artist Maria Pareja. "I asked for an interview," she recalls. "Tomm asked if I wanted to do a test for *WolfWalkers*. I did the test, and one week later, they said they wanted me here for scene illustration."

Moore replies, "I remember looking at her test with Ross: It looked great. In scene illustration, some people were more suited to the town side, which was much more structured and controlled: perfect squares and perfect lines. We needed someone to develop the forest into something much wilder and freer. Maria's style of drawing was naturally sketchy and loose, so it really fit the job."

Although Pareja speaks modestly of her efforts, Moore and Stewart are quick to praise her work. "She had a cartooniness in the way she drew," Moore says. "Some of the other scene illustrators would draw a forest, and the characters wouldn't fit in them as well as they would in Maria's. She uses these nice cartoony, simple shapes that Mebh would fit in. Maria ended up developing the forest style on her own after that."

"She drew the trees the same way she drew the characters, that's why it all fit together," agrees Stewart. "It didn't feel like a naturalistic sketch with a cartoon character plunked on top of it. The whole world fit together."

The directors wanted the backgrounds to provide an effective stage for the characters, where they would look at home, but still stand out. Stewart compares the backgrounds to comic book panels: Each setting is designed to fit the action in the scene. It shouldn't look like a previously existing background that the filmmakers dropped the characters into. Moore notes, "The characters are the main focus and everything has to support them."

"The forest is like another character: It has to match with Mebh and the other characters," says Pareja. "I think about composition and everything in the frame, but in a way that makes the character feel like part of the scene. If you're going to have leaves, you have to have leaves that match the character, so it's unified. It's like making a stage for the characters to perform on.

"I leave lots of space, so the characters aren't drowned by details surrounding them," she continues. "The forest is always framing the characters in a nice way. But the trees are also flowing and have an energy: In some sequences, the forest is adapted to the action and the energy of the characters."

"I find it really exciting when I look at action sequences where the painting and linework is really expressive," adds Stewart. "The lines become scratchy pencil marks. When things are calm, we let the paint bleed out to the edge—sometimes we even see a bit of the watercolour paper. It feels like the inner world of the characters is expressed in the backgrounds: The forest changes if the character is frightened or calm. Everything we do follows the characters: the effects, the magic, the water, the backgrounds. It all feels like one integrated image."

One important step in developing an animated feature is the colour script, a preliminary series of images that suggests the feelings in each sequence. The images may be simple lines or patches of colour—a gentle blue for a calm sequence, stark red and black for a dramatic moment. Or they may be paintings that suggest the composition of the scenes. The look of the colour script varies according to the directors' wishes and the artist's approach, but its function remains the same: to provide an overview of how the story will develop in purely visual terms.

The colour script for *WolfWalkers*, which required about seventy individual paintings, was created by Alice Dieudonné, who says, "The colour script is a narrative map of the movie that includes everything you can't say in words, so you have to say it with colour. You can translate a feeling into words, you can translate it into music, you can translate it into colours. The colour script expresses the emotional lines and the narrative arc of the movie.

"I'd be given scenes, like an animator who's given a key moment, then I'd work out the transitions between them," she continues. "There are lows and highs: The emotions form a wave that people have to recognize from the colour script. But you can't work on different sequences separately: You have to work on them all together. It's one colour in relation to another, putting all the information in the colours."

"We talk a lot about the colours because *Kells* was really green, *Song of the Sea* was blue: They have dominant colours," Stewart adds. "We wanted this film to have an autumn orangey-ness to it."

The Cartoon Saloon features revel in their two-dimensionality. But the character designs have to be more than sophisticated combinations of lines and shapes. The animators have to be able to move them in ways that convey not only physical motions, but personality and emotions as well.

"I looked at the previous Cartoon Saloon films, but I also looked at the work of Studio Ghibli," says character designer Federico Pirovano. "The wolf in *Princess Mononoke* may not have been appealing, but she was very expressive, which I found interesting. Even if I wasn't using that design style, I saw it was cool to push the character designs."

"A lot of people think it's all about the graphic shapes, and make the characters very flat and cutout-y. You need to think both three-dimensionally and graphically at the same time," notes Sandra Andersen, who also contributed character designs. "It's about finding the strong poses, the dramatic poses, but also choosing the strongest graphics."
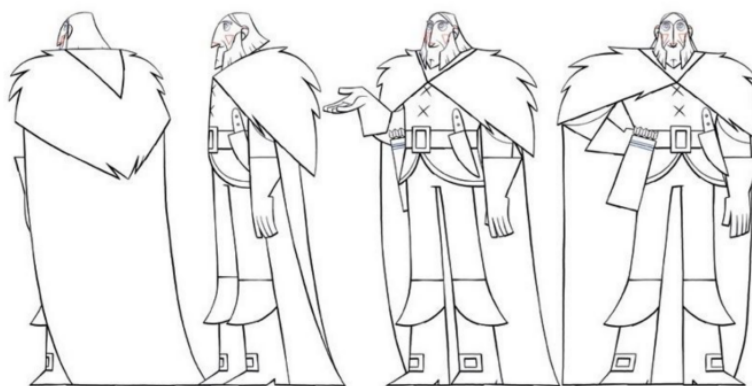
At the beginning of any production, the designers make hundreds of rough drawings as they explore different ideas for the characters. Some designs look too strange, too familiar, too bland, too unappealing. The artists draw and redraw. At the end of the day, the floor of the studio may be so littered with crumpled paper, it looks like snow fell.

"At the beginning, I was trying to push the designs in very weird ways," Pirovano recalls. "Bill's nose was much bigger; we wouldn't have been able to turn him. Since Moll is a princess, I tried making her a towering troll, taller than Bill, with sharp teeth and an attitude.

"Tomm is super open and super easy to talk with," he continues. "I would draw sheets of different possibilities for a character in rough pencil. Tomm would select the things he liked, and point out ones he didn't. He'd take my drawings and do little draw-overs, explaining what he wanted. I'd rework the character following those guidelines."

Much of the development work was done on paper, as Moore and Stewart wanted to preserve the look of the artist's sketches. The drawings were later scanned into a computer for final adjustments. It's faster and easier to use Photoshop to alter the size of the nose on an otherwise successful design than to make the artist redraw the same image repeatedly.

During the development process, the artists will do turn-arounds: views of the character from different angles to ensure

"The look of the studio's films is very much about the designs. You need to make sure the animation works in the scene and looks believable, but still fits this flat aesthetic. Sometimes a curve looks nicer than the actual form of a paw. There are choices to make, but part of that process is allowing the animators and clean-up artists to have input in those choices."

BETHW ITCHALLS,
FINAL LINE DESIGNER
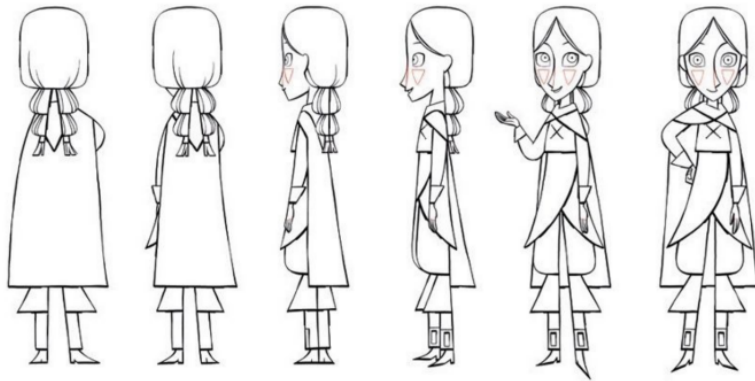
> "We want to keep what looks best. For the wolves, instead of turning the designs around all the time, we pushed for certain angles that looked the best. Same for the human characters. You may use an awkward angle for the mood of the shot, but for the key poses, we always go for what looks nice and graphic."

SANDRA ANDERSEN,
LEAD POSING ARTIST

THIS SPREAD *The "turnarounds" show the characters from various angles, helping the animators to draw them consistently. The red patches on their cheeks indicate where a pinkish colour will be applied to keep their faces from looking too mask-like. Design by Sandra Andersen; final line by Elizabeth Witchalls.*

the design works from every vantage point. The character designs must also have an underlying structure so that multiple artists can draw them. It's easier to keep a character consistent-looking if the animators know her head is basically a sphere and the bottoms of her eyes touch the equator, rather than trying to approximate the shapes freehand.

"As a designer and a guy, I find cute little girls difficult to draw. I ended up doing the least work on Robyn," says Pirovano. "They liked my design for the generic wolves from the beginning, and it just evolved. On Bill, I changed the design of his nose, then Sandra took it over. She's amazing at making a character turn and do all the things an animator needs it to do."

"I didn't work much on the concepts: I was finalizing the designs for the animators. I looked at turnarounds and the construction of the characters so people could draw them," Andersen replies. "We have to be able to turn them around; otherwise, the animation will all be flat and from the side. When I get a rough design, I try to stay true to it. But I break the design down into simple shapes you can track. For example, I divided Robyn's leg into halves. The halfway mark is the knee, where the pants stop. It's just a way to give some rules to drawing the characters to keep them consistent."

Witchalls adds, "I was tasked with designing the final line of all the characters for the clean-up department to follow. The

characters are tricky. There's not a lot of landmarks on their faces for the animator to register to make sure they stay on model. So it was really important to get the model sheets as tight and definitive as possible."

Kilkenny had to be a bustling town, filled with people going about their everyday tasks—and watching the story unfold. Designing the many individuals who make up the crowds fell to Pirovano.

"For the townsfolk, I did a bunch of sketches that they liked, because they had a lot of personality. I was treating them as real characters," he says. "I hate to see animated movies where the crowds are the worst designs. Sometimes, there are awful designs just behind the main characters, instead of using the opportunity to make the world richer."

One hallmark of the Cartoon Saloon features is the way the characters work not only as individual figures on the screen, but also as parts of larger patterns when they're grouped together. In the opening of *The Secret of Kells*, the monks who watch Brendan chasing a goose stand as single characters—and as elements in complex graphic designs.

"Because they're in the middle, the townsfolk share some elements of the main characters and the backgrounds," Pirovano explains. "We have them connect with each other in ways that recall an old stained-glass window, with lines between the pieces of glass. When you look at it, it doesn't necessarily feel like everything is separated, but like a composition of interesting shapes that fit together like a puzzle."

Pirovano's crowd designs include caricatures of many of the Cartoon Saloon artists. The figures had to be interesting, but not so interesting they drew the viewer's attention away from the main characters.

"Sometimes we had one or two characters pop out too much, and we had to remove them," Pirovano recalls. "My process is less about 'How do I make their design less interesting?' than 'How do I make their attitude less interesting?' You can have a very uninteresting design, but if the character is waving his hands, it will be noticeable. You can make interesting characters, but in ways that blend with the backgrounds."

"*WolfWalkers* is the first project that I've directed that had so many characters," says Moore. "We've got crowds of people: I never realized how much preparation that takes. I think I'll go back to making movies with just two characters on the screen at a time. Two characters in the Arctic."

THIS SPREAD *Alice Dieudonné's colour script for the film. Although the individual images are simplified, the artwork traces the changing emotions in the story through colour.*

OLD KILKENNY

Often referred to as "The Marble City" For its black limestone buildings, Kilkenny began as an ecclesiastical foundation in the early sixth century of the Common Era. The name Kilkenny comes from *Cill Chainnigh*, "Cell (or Church) of Cainnech (or Canice)." After the Norman invasion of Ireland in the twelfth century, Richard Strongbow built a wooden fortress near the site of modern Kilkenny Castle. In 1609, James I of England granted Kilkenny a royal charter conferring the status of city.

In 1641, during the growing conflict between the king and Parliament in England, a group of Catholics of English and Irish extraction established the Confederation of Kilkenny to defend their faith, rights, and liberties. Oliver Cromwell attacked Kilkenny in March 1650. Although he did not enter the city due to an outbreak of plague, his troops wreaked extensive damage. The attack was followed by a large-scale confiscation of property.

Moore and Stewart set *WolfWalkers* in Kilkenny at the time of Cromwell, but they were more interested in creating an effective setting for their fantasy than in a scrupulous depiction of seventeenth-century life. Stewart notes, "There are certain things some historians will be up in arms about. But we hope they'll accept the fantasy over a factual approach."

"There's a bit of poetic license in the visuals, but we take inspiration because we grew up here in Kilkenny, surrounded by all this beautiful medieval architecture," adds Moore. "Every day, you're reminded of the past. We've created a fantasy Kilkenny that helps the story."

To create a believable fantasy, the artists studied the original in detail. Monuments in the city range from St. Canice's Cathedral, which dates from the thirteenth century, to the Rothe House, built by a wealthy merchant family in 1594. Scattered throughout the city are old stairs, chimneys, doorways, walls, and lanes. Although they came from many countries—Brazil, France, Italy, Iceland, Chile—the artists quickly developed an affection for Kilkenny.

Production designer Maria Pareja recalls, "Clara Avedillo, who was a scene illustrator, would sketch the chimneys she saw looking out the studio windows. She kept saying, 'I want to draw more chimneys!' You have all this reference really close."

"Kilkenny is a city that preserves its history well, and being immersed in the city helped to get the right feeling into the backgrounds," agrees background final line supervisor Eduardo Damasceno. "Seeing the structures and the kind of materials they used gives you an understanding of how people lived then. When you can bring the feeling of being in a place into a drawing, it makes the art come alive."

Colour background supervisor Stefano Scapolan adds, "It's more about getting Ireland. Ireland has a unique colour palette that's even visible in the center of town."

1–2 *Geoff King sketching one of the many historic buildings in Kilkenny.*

3 *A page from friedrich Schäper's sketchbook of Kilkenny.*

OPPOSITE *Photos of historic buildings in Kilkenny by Antonia Cancheva, with notes and drawings.*

BUILDINGS THAT EXISTED IN KILKENNY IN 1650.

SCENE ILLUSTRATION

SHEE ALMS HOUSE

LOCATION DESIGN

ST CANICE'S CATHEDRAL & ROUND TOWER, B. 13TH CENTURY / TOWER B. 9TH CENTURY.

GRACE'S CASTLE

KYTELER'S INN B. 13TH CENTURY
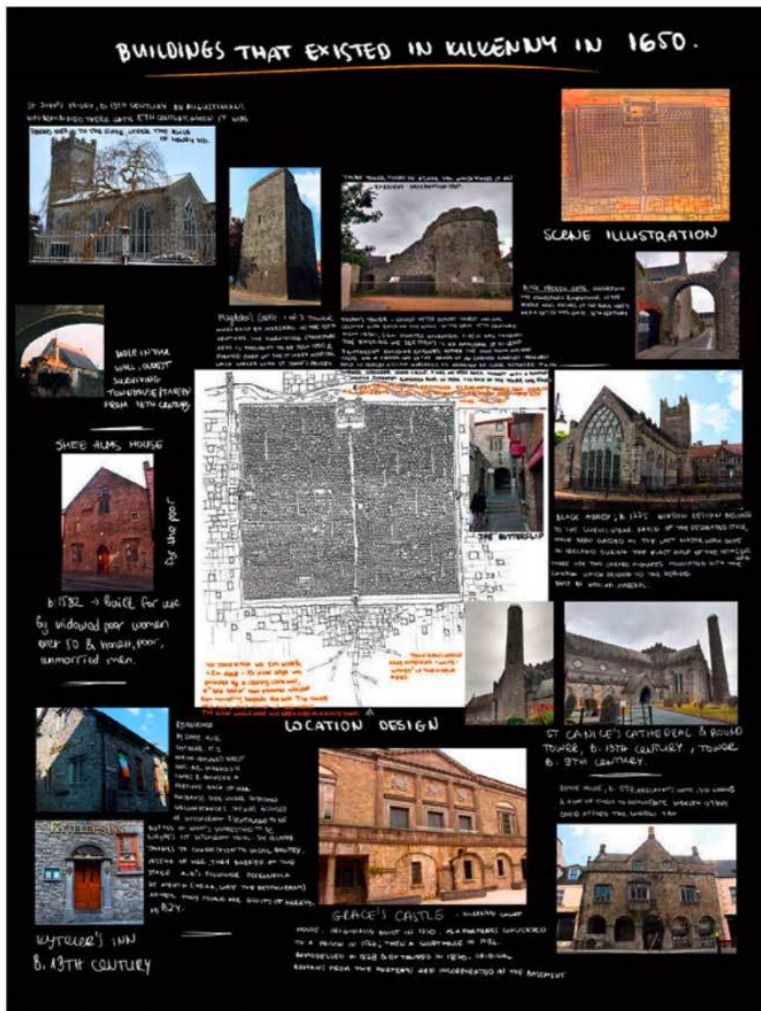
"On the north stands boldly forth the large and magnificent cathedral church sacred to St. Canice, the abbot; southwards, and verging towards the east, rises the castle, or rather a fortress guarded by many castles and bulwarks. From this twofold source sprang the civic community . . ."

DESCRIPTION OF KILKENNY FROM CONCERNING THE DIOCESE OF OSSORY, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY CE

The Kilkenny in the film had to feel like a vibrant community where people went about their daily lives, despite the presence of wolves in the forests and occupying troops in the city.

"When you're drawing an old building, it has to feel lived-in, it has to have some kind of history. The paint should be slightly chipped, just to show it's not brand-new from Ikea. That helps ground the characters," layout supervisor Leo Weiss explains. "When you're designing the streets, buildings, and walls, it's interesting to think about, say, the organization of a market then. What kind of goods could you buy? Were there cobblestones on the ground? Did you have straw underfoot to suck up moisture? It all helps to create a more believable image."

Many of the artists went on sketching trips in the city and took photographs. Details of the architecture and the way light played on the stone structures became fixed in their minds.

"It's interesting to see what details people pay attention to," Weiss continues. "Someone might add a little alcove in a wall, where people used to put votive candles. That tiny design element gives a bit more dimension to a wall that could have just been plain stone and boring."

Producer Nora Twomey sums up the artists' affection for the city when she concludes, "Kilkenny is a beautiful place, and our history is just underneath our feet. At the Medieval Mile Museum, they tell us something like sixty thousand people are buried under parts of High Street: generations of people who struggled to make a life here. It's incredibly poignant, and you feel it in the streets. You feel connected to history. You're a continuation of something rather than an end or a beginning."

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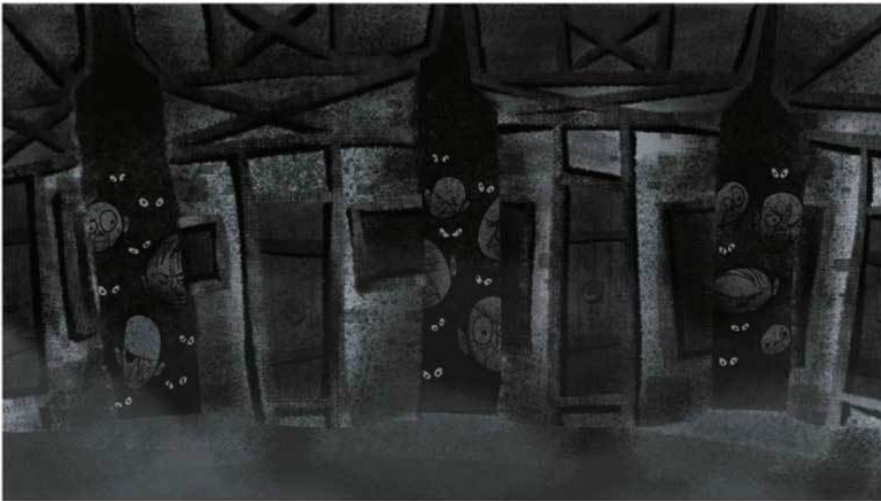
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1–2 *Elliot Cowan's studies suggest how the wolves might view Kilkenny.*

3–4 *Two views of town from the wolves' point of view. Artists: Friedrich Schäper and Tomm Moore.*

OPPOSITE *A rough map of Kilkenny and its environs for the artists' reference. Artist: Ross Stewart.*
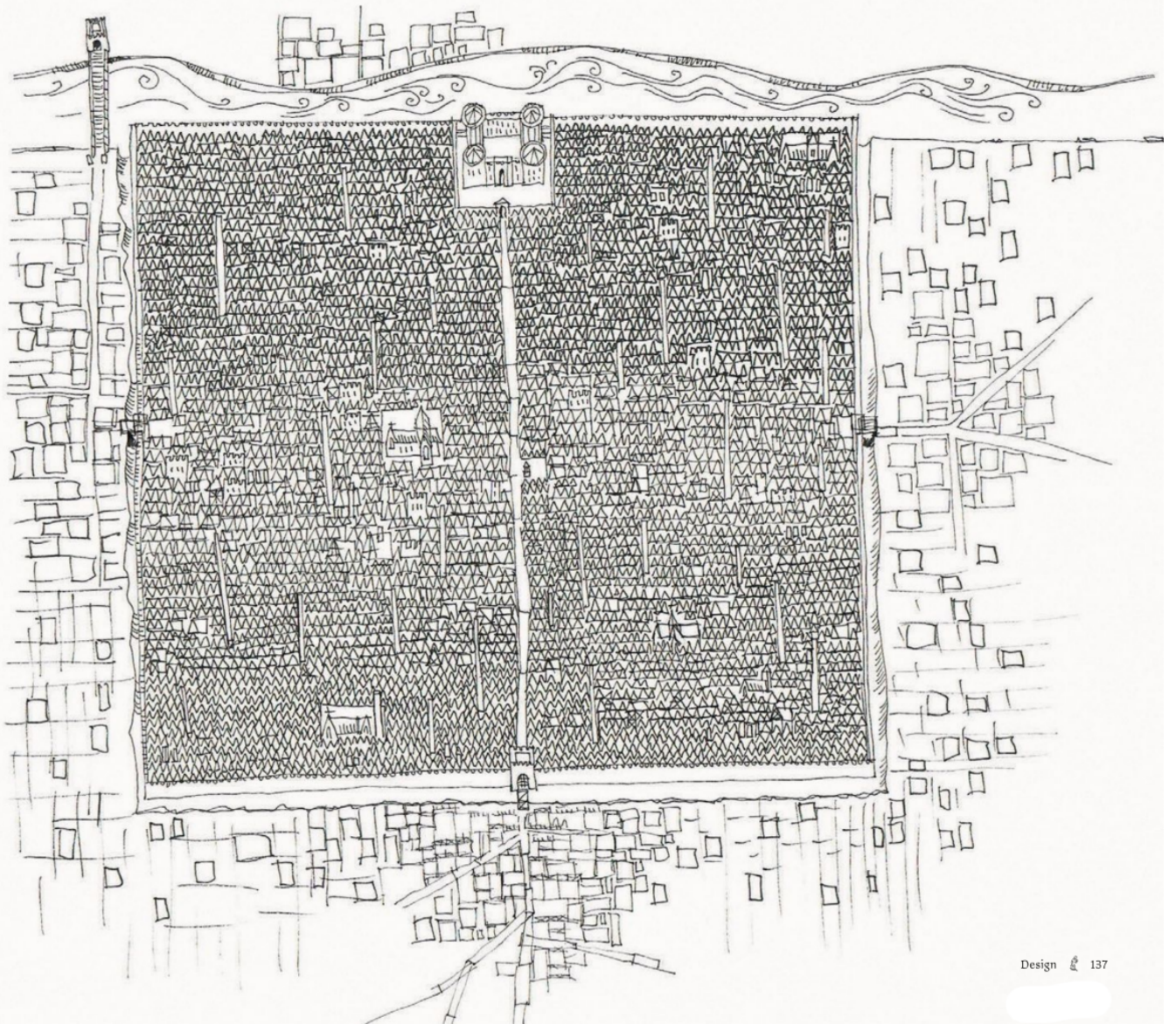
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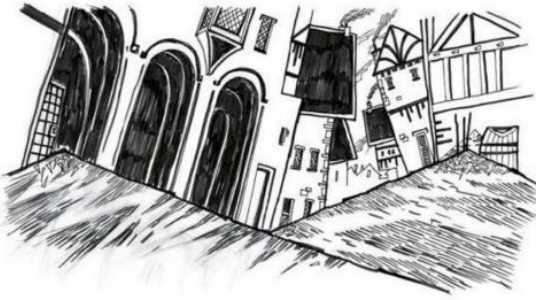
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1 *Stylized wolves prowl the streets of
the town at dusk. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

2 *Tomm Moore gives the buildings of
Kilkenny a faceted, almost Cubist look.*

3 *Friedrich Schäper flattens and
simplifies the façades.*

OPPOSITE *Robyn looks ill at ease in
the streets of Kilkenny in this study.
Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.*

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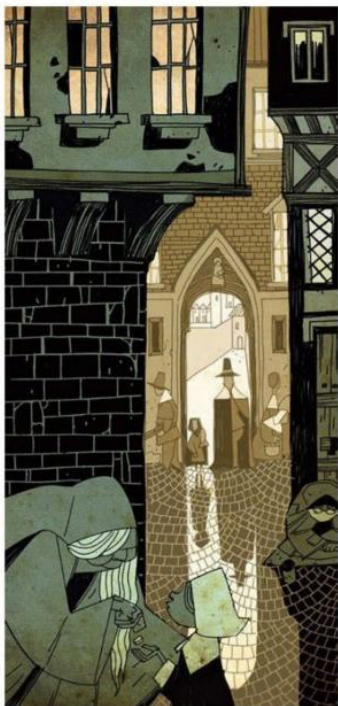
1–3 *Kilkenny had to feel like a bustling town, with its inhabitants going about their daily lives. Miki Montlló, Friedrich Schäper, and Ross Stewart explore visions of the old buildings, with characters by Tomm Moore.*

4 *Miki Montlló finds patterns in the stones of buildings and the faces of the inhabitants.*

5 *The restricted view of the sky suggests the limited world occupied Kilkenny imposes on its citizens. Artists: Miki Montlló.*

6 *Merlyn soars over the crowds and chaos of the city. Scene illustration by Clara Avedillo; characters by Federico Pirovano.*
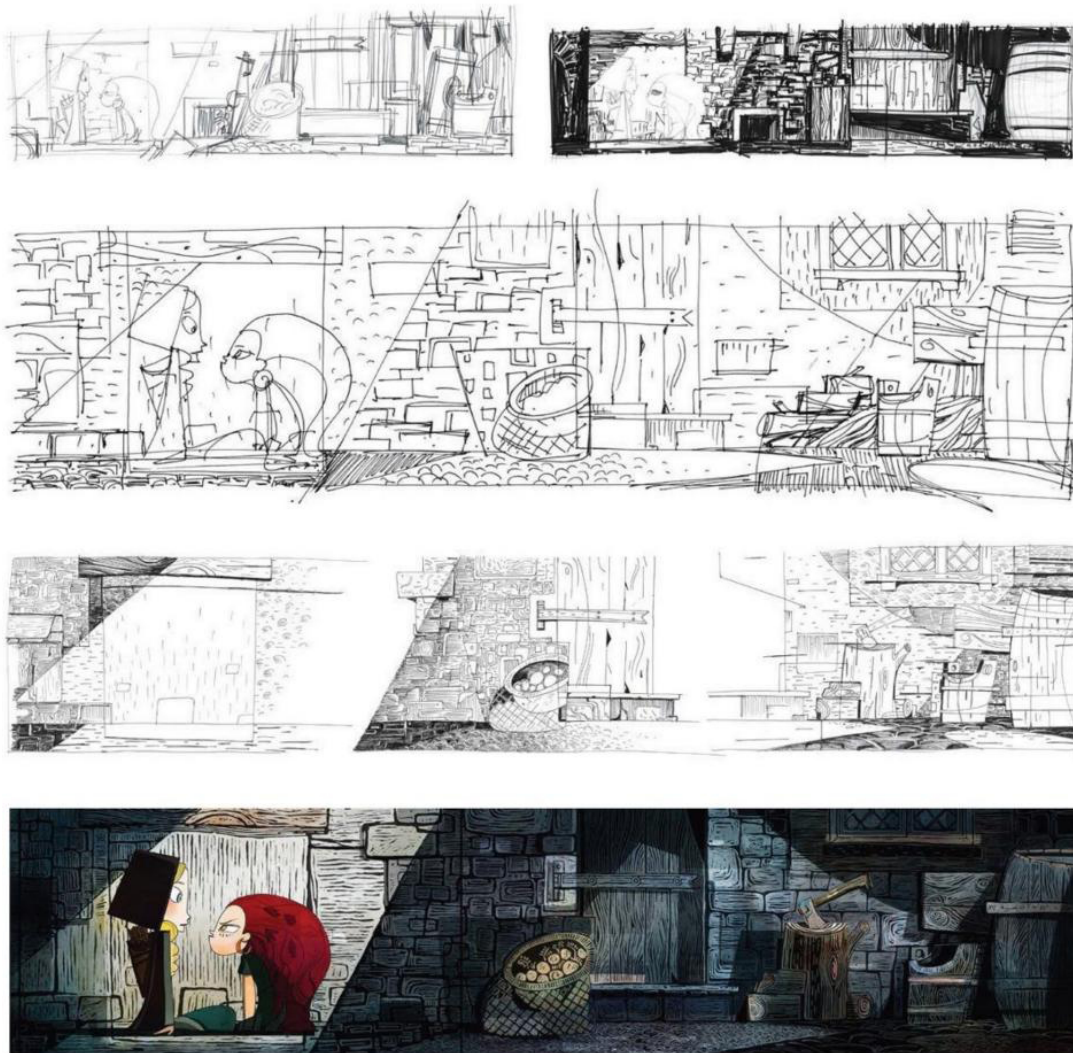
LEFT
Friedrich Schäper examines different ways of staging a visit between Robyn and Mebh in the backstreets of the town.

OPPOSITE
An awkward moment between the girls in the town market. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.
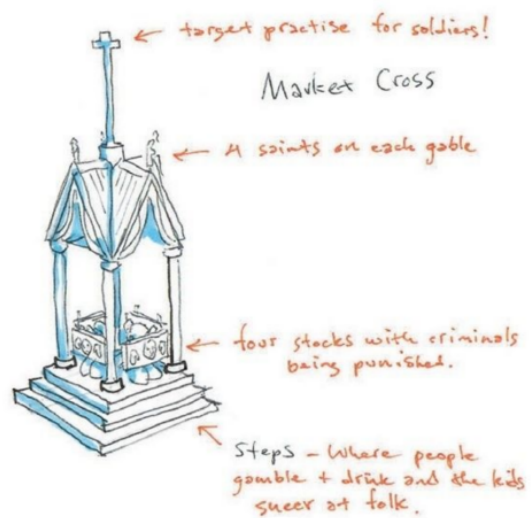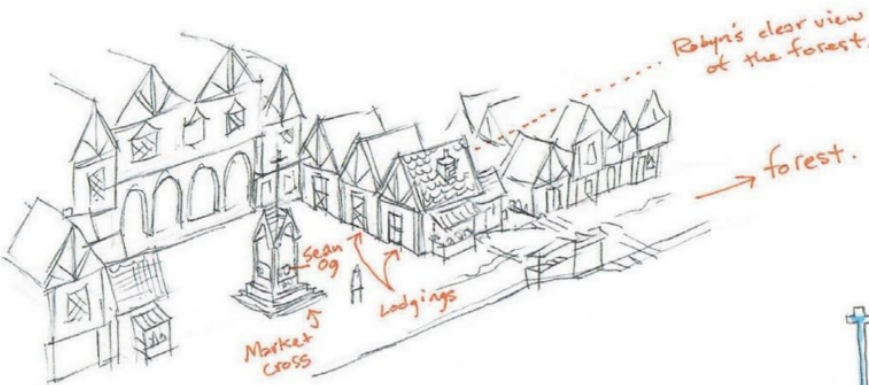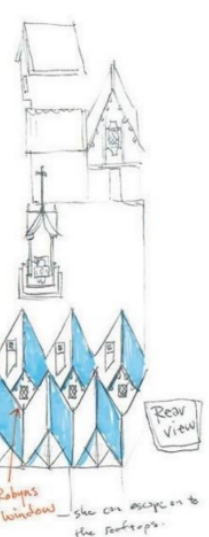
Robyn's clear view of the forest.

→ forest.

Sean Og

Lodgings

Market Cross

Rear View

Robyn's Window — she can escape on to the rooftops.

← target practise for soldiers!

Market Cross

← 4 saints on each gable

← four stocks with criminals being punished.

Steps — where people gamble + drink and the kids sneer at folk.

"You can't necessarily use everything around you, but when you've seen real things, you don't have to invent them. It's the tiny ideas and tweaks the artists add that turn something plain into something that has some history to it, something that feels true."

LEO WEISS, LAYOUT SUPERVISOR
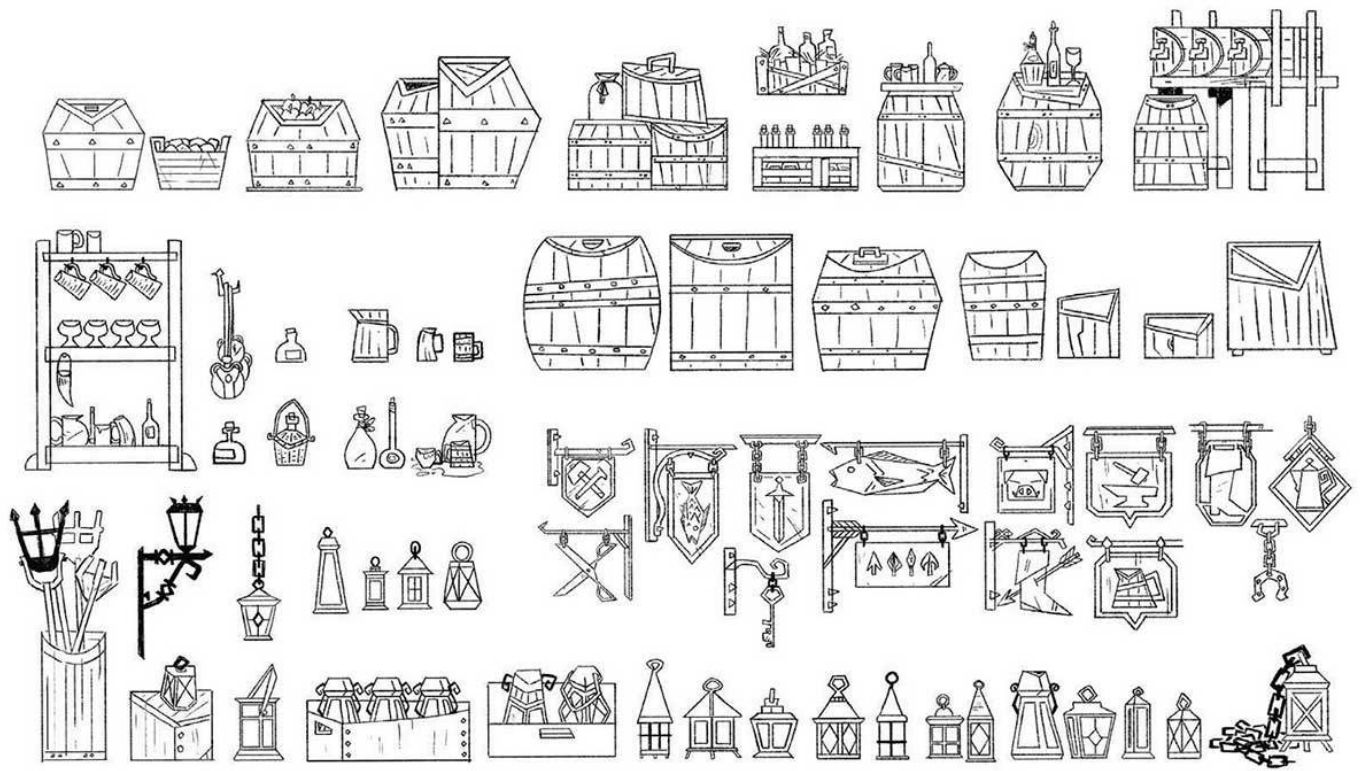
TOP ROW *Antonia Cancheva's detailed architectural drawings reflect the different economic levels of the modest St. John's Suburb, the more prosperous Irishtown, and the wealthy Hightown.*

MIDDLE AND BOTTOM ROWS *Careful drawings of the stalls and tents for the merchants and farmers in the marketplace. Artist: Walter Giampaglia.*

St. John's Suburb

Irishtown / Market Cross Area

PUB

Hightown

Lantern Seller   Bodhran Maker   Candles Seller   Witch Doctor Cart   Pub / Alcohol Seller   Wine Barrel   Pastry Seller
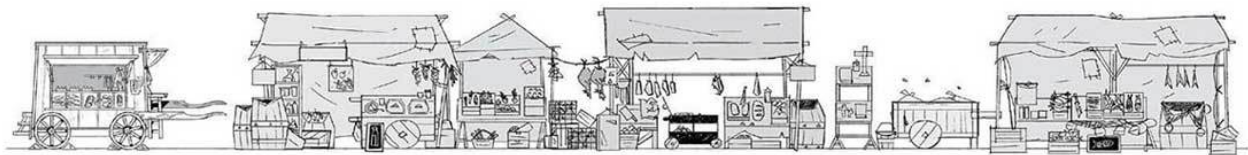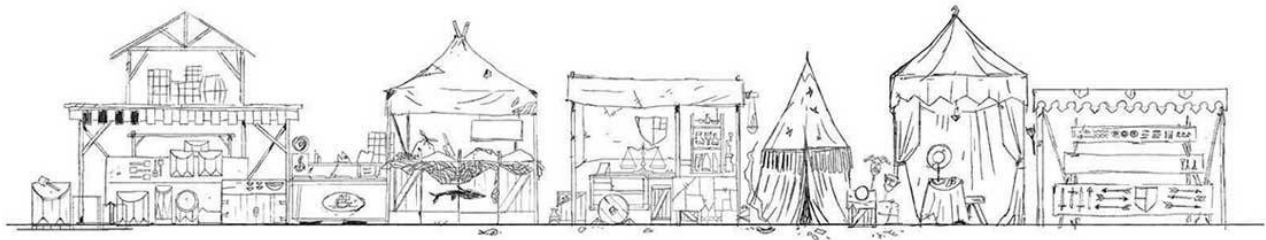
TOP *The faceted-looking buildings loom over the inhabitants of Kilkenny in this drawing. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

ABOVE *The wolf-spirit returns to Robyn's body in Clara Avedillo's muted scene.*

RIGHT *A clandestine meeting between Robyn and Mebh echoes Peter Pan. Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.*
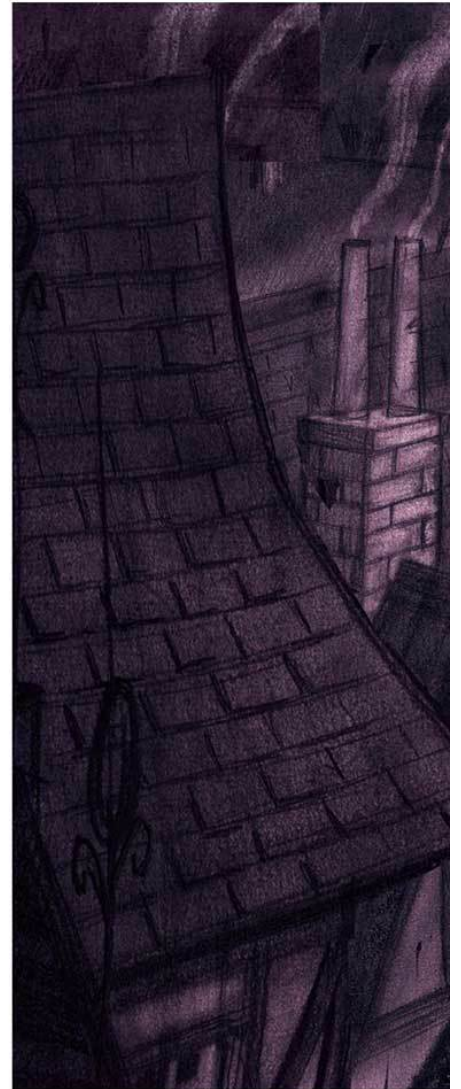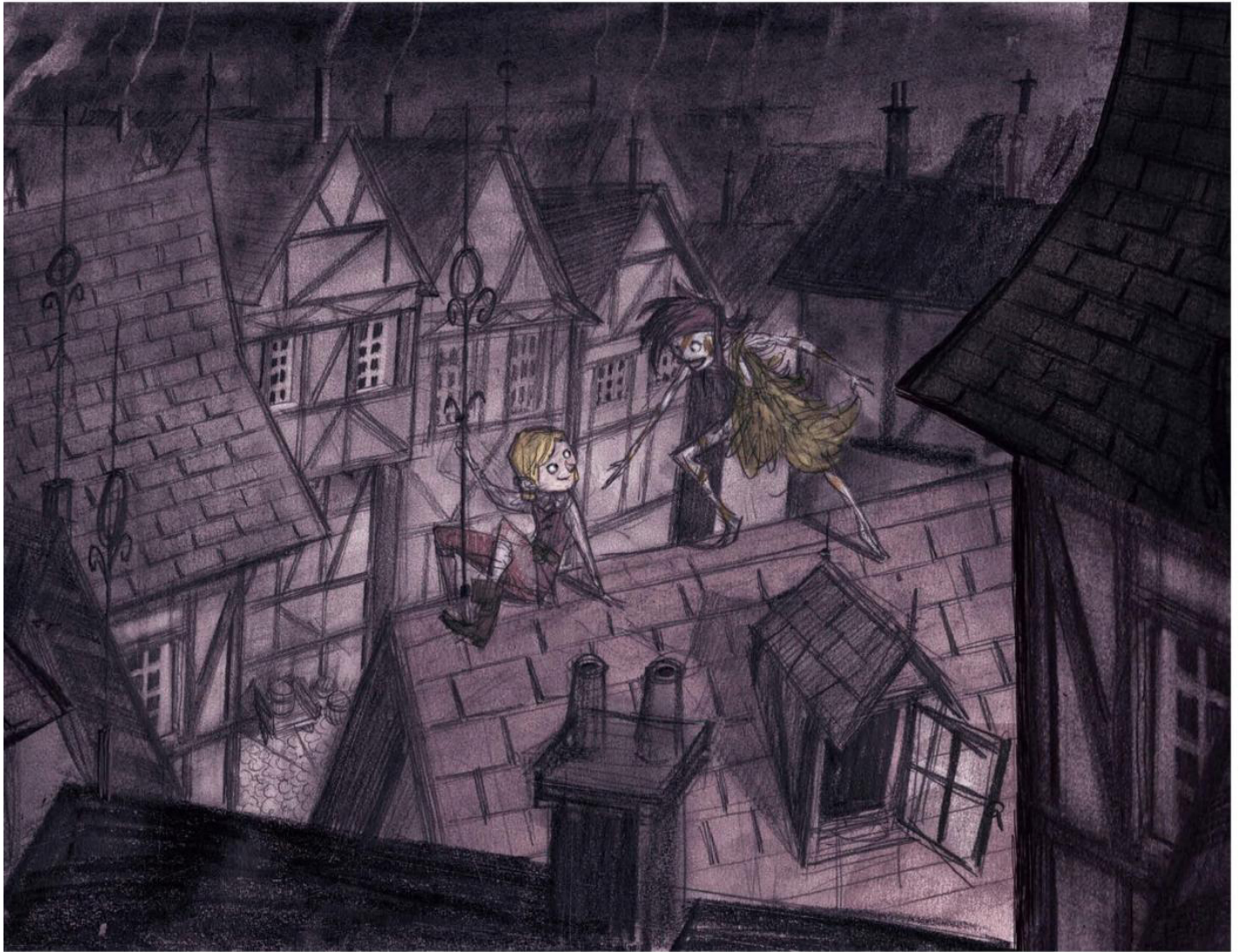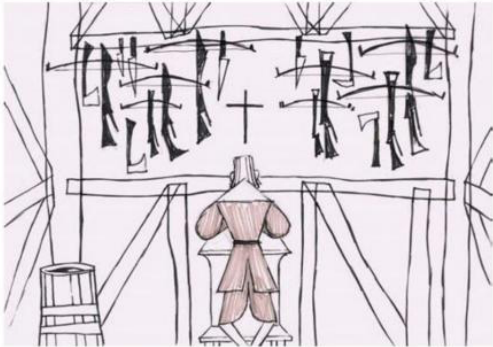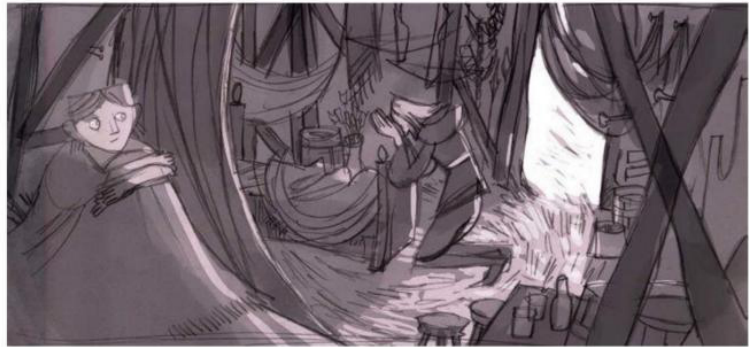
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1 *Ross Stewart imagines Bill at prayer amid the crossbows and crosses in his home.*

2 *Robyn watches. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

3 *Robyn looks down from her precarious bed. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

4 *Robyn tries to restrain a furious Bill. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

5 *A drawing of Bill and Robyn's home. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

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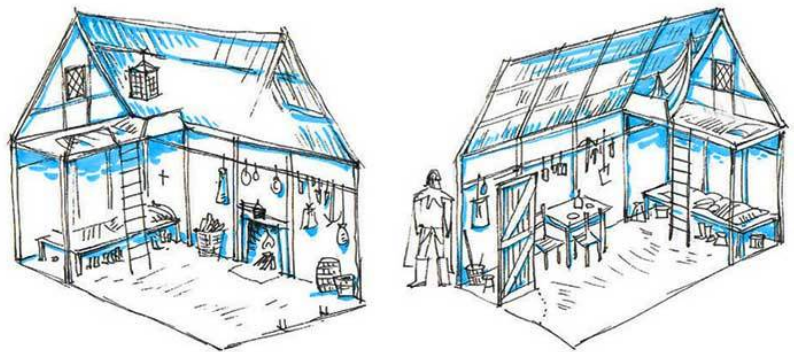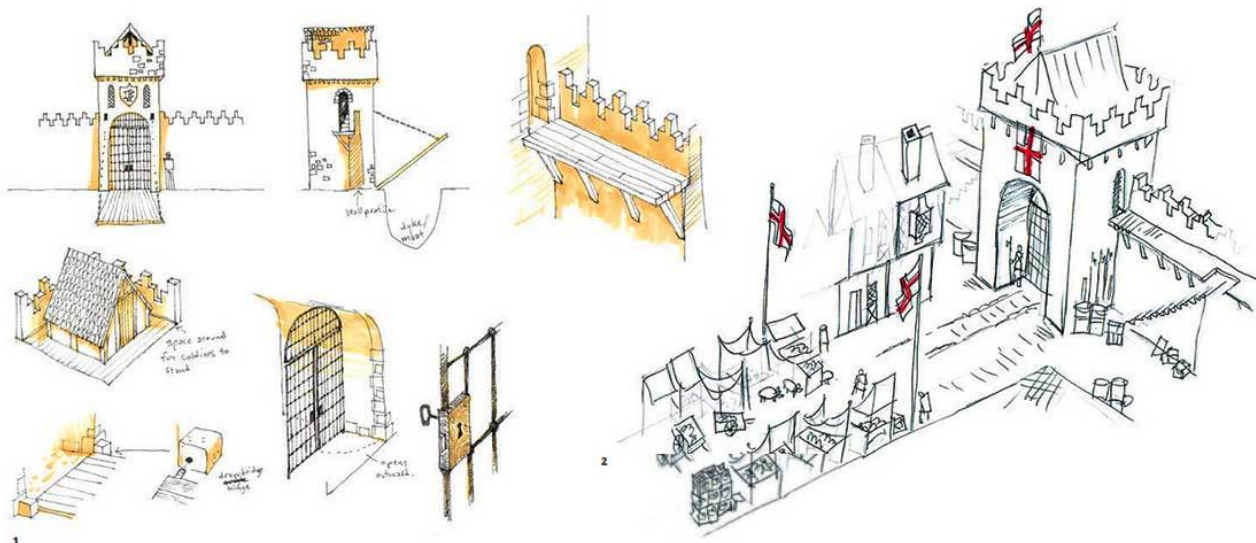
Kilkenny was a walled city in the seventeenth century.

1–2 Architectural details of town fortifications inspired by the castle. Artist: Ross Stewart.

3 A sketch of an imagined older version of the castle. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.

4 A photograph of Kilkenny Castle.

5–6 These simple but clear sketches explore the relationship between the castle and the town. Artist: Ross Stewart.

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THE GREAT BEAR

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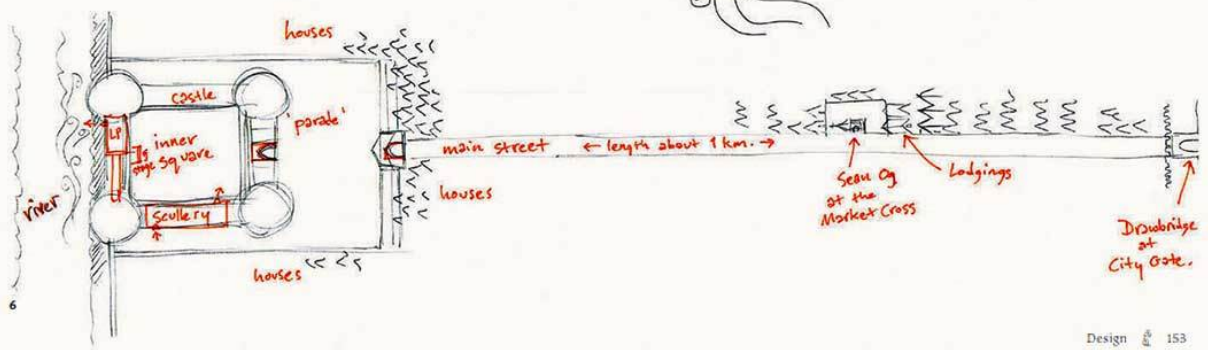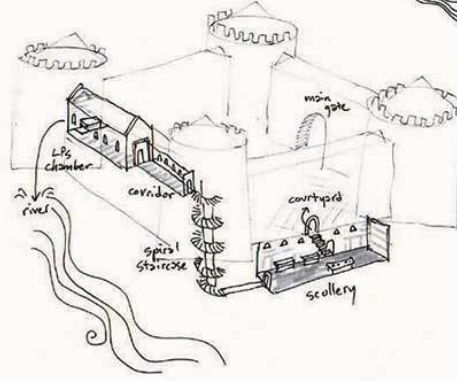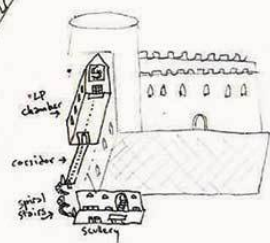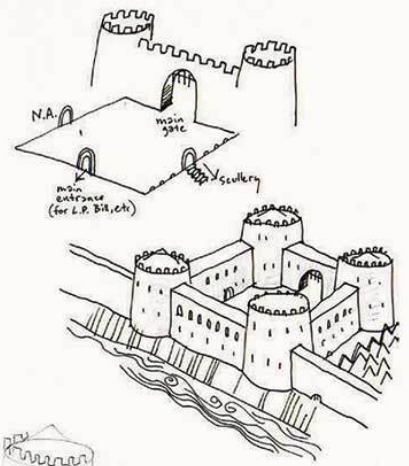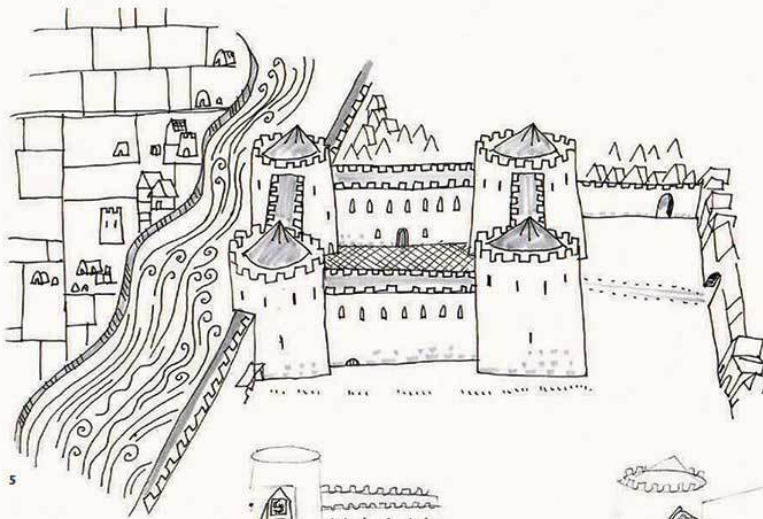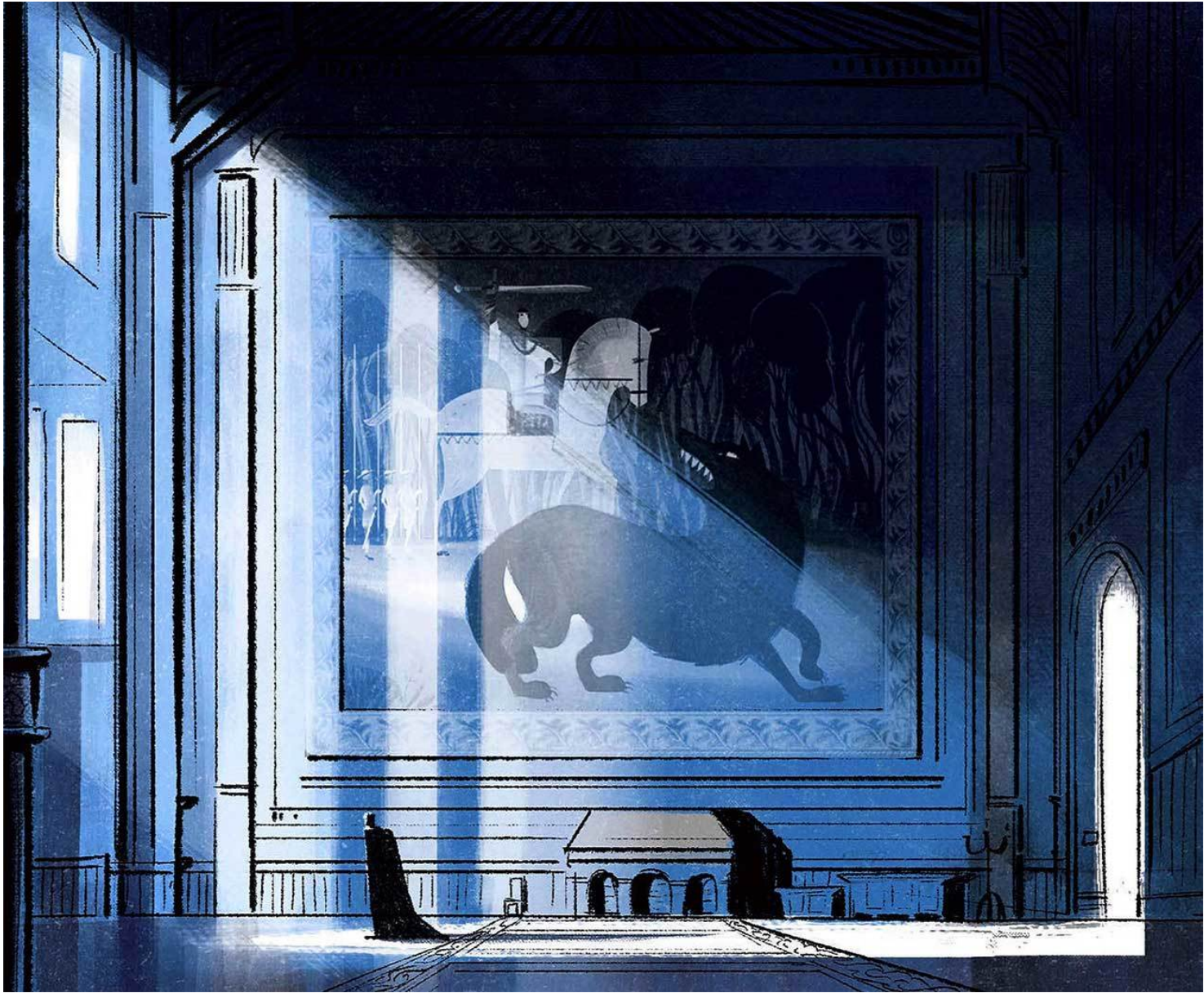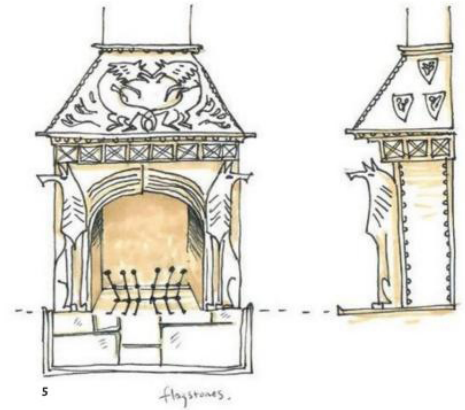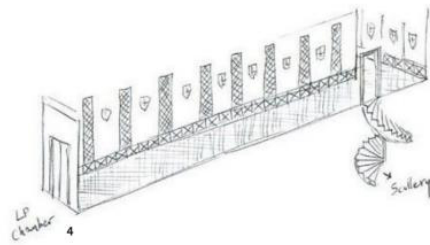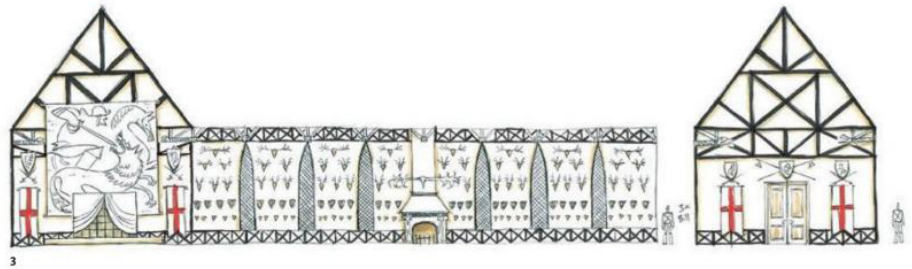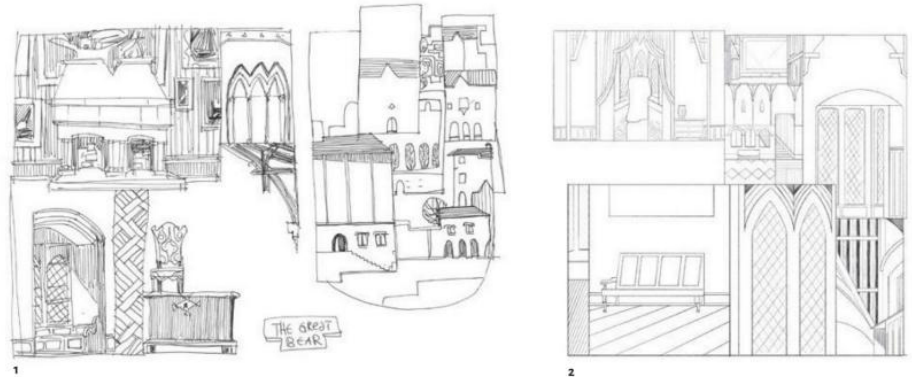
OPPOSITE *The overscale architecture and dramatic lighting imbue the Lord Protector's headquarters with a sense of power—and menace. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

1–2 *Sketches of details of the headquarters. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.*

3–5 *Additional architectural elements feature wolf statues. Artist: Ross Stewart.*
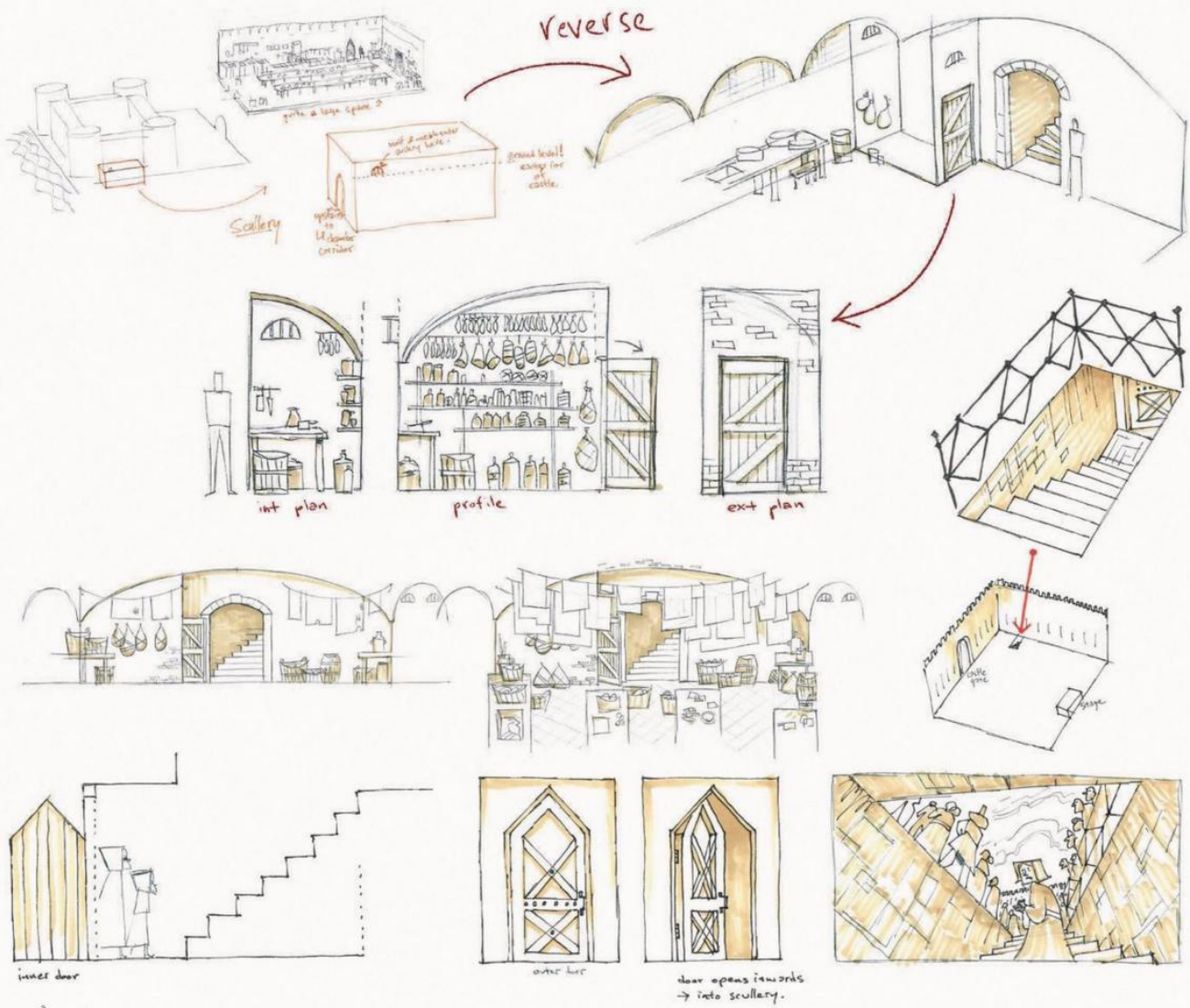
5

flagstones.

reverse

Scullery

int plan

profile

ext plan

inner door

outer door

door opens inwards
→ into scullery.

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TOWN LINE VS. FOREST LINE

WolfWalkers focuses on the conflict between individuals who seek to dominate nature and people who want to live in harmony with it. The former see themselves as masters of a land they've subdued, whereas the latter share a place in the natural world. That conflict is embodied visually in the division between the rectilinear buildings of Kilkenny and the sensually curving vegetation in the forest, a division that extends to the lines used to draw them.

"We have two different worlds," says animation FX supervisor Andreu Campos. "The world inside the city, where everything is square and straight, with very sharp lines. In the forest, things are wild and rounded. Even the characters in town have more geometric lines, while the characters in the forest are rounded and soft and warm."

In the early 1960s, Disney artist Ub Iwerks modified a photocopy machine to transfer the animators' drawings onto sheets of clear acetate called "cels," in lines of black powder. The powder never adhered perfectly, giving the lines a friable quality noticeable in *101 Dalmatians*. The Cartoon Saloon artists used that look as a jumping-off point for the slightly imperfect "town line," which suggested a woodblock print.

"To show the point of view of the Puritans, we went for the woodblock because it seems stiff and more uptight. We see their world is all squares and boxes, and everything's ordered, compared to the forest, where everything is organic," explains Moore. "The idea was to show the forest and all the wild things as expressively as possible. We went for loose brushstrokes and scratchy pencil lines, with lots of texture and rendering on the wolves: They feel like sketches."

Clean-up animation supervisor John Walsh adds, "The forest line replicates how a rough animation drawing looks. That lovely energetic line is exactly what Tomm and Ross were looking for."

Layout supervisor Leo Weiss comments, "The town has a strong visual identity: It's square, woodcut-like patterns. The forest is organic, even chaotic. It also has strong rules: no straight lines, lots of curves. In the middle, we've got farmland that runs from the town to the forest, so it gets more structured or more open as you get closer to one edge or the other."

Working on the film required the artists to draw in two distinct styles. "I find the town line easier, because I come from a background of doing clean-up," says final line designer Beth Witchalls. "I'm used to the tight control, so I'm able to draw a straight line without wobbles. A lot of people struggle to draw a straight line freehand. The forest line is easier to draw, but it took me longer to find: I'd been in this rigid cleanup mindset for a while."

The distinctive look of the lines extends to the characters. Robyn, Bill, the Lord Protector, and the townspeople are drawn in the woodblock style, whereas Mebh, Moll, and the wolves are rendered in the forest style. "All the artists are working with characters in both line styles," says clean-up animation lead Tatiana Mazzei. "Some people are more comfortable with one line than the other, so we try to give them more of those shots. But they're still going to get both.

"We have rules that dictate where a line should break, where it should be thicker, where it should be thinner. After a while, it's programmed in your head," she continues. "But if you get a forest line shot after working with the town line for three weeks, it may take a couple of hours to get back into it."

Despite the challenges, the artists take obvious pride in how even the individual lines support the film's story.

Eduardo Damasceno, background final line supervisor, says, "It's nice to see how everything builds on the geometrical town and the organic forest. In the city, we keep the lines constrained and use ink to create clearer lines. But we can't be super clean: That's why we go for the woodcut effect. For the forest, we use thick pencils and even charcoal to vary the lines as much as possible, to give them a wild feeling.

"Tomm and Ross had a vision from the beginning, and they kept it," he adds. "It took a lot of linework, but that's how they wanted it to look. They found people who could make it happen without breaking the animation process."
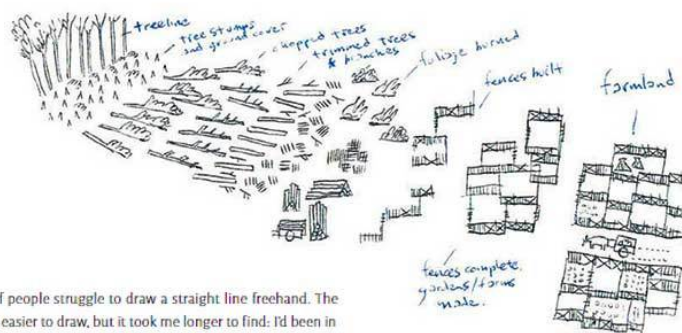

> "We were influenced by Isao Takahata's The Tale of the Princess Kaguya, which used the language of pencil line to tell the story."

ROSS STEWART,
CO-DIRECTOR

ABOVE *Ross Stewart's map ensures events in the story will unfold in a coherent space.*

OPPOSITE *The fields that mark the transition between the angular world of the town and the curvilinear realm of the forest presented special challenges to the artists. Artist: Ross Stewart.*
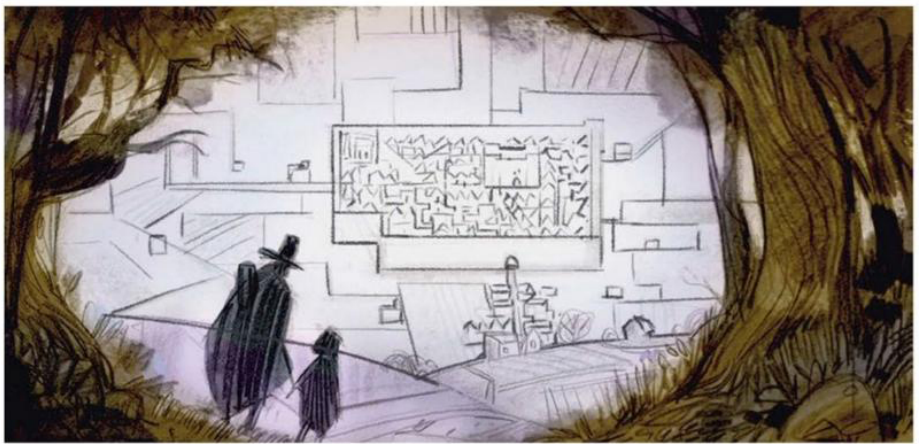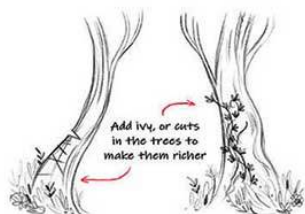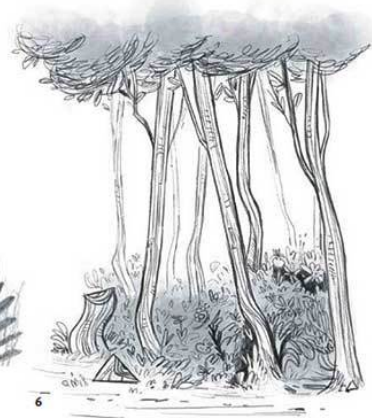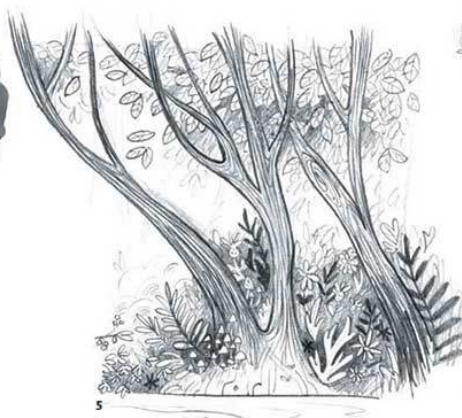
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Add ivy, or cuts in the trees to make them richer
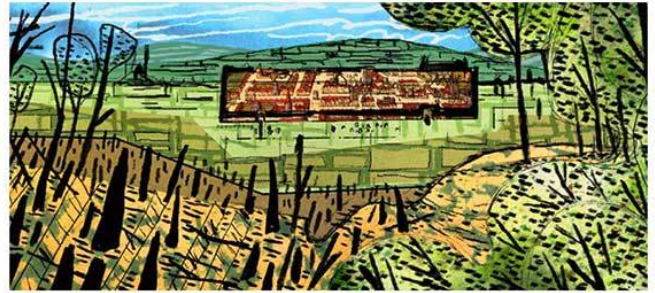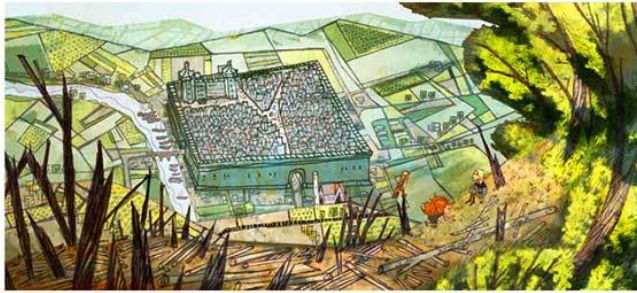
1 Robyn and Mebh bid farewell at the point where one world ends and another begins. Artist: Ross Stewart.

2 Two small sketches by Friedrich Schäper stress the curving designs of the forest.

3 Bill and Robyn return to the rectilinear world they know. Artist: Friedrich Schäper.

4 Maria Pareja's study of the forest has an art nouveau grace.

5 Artist: Ludovic Gavillet.

6–7 Artist: Maria Pareja.

8 Artist: Clara Avedillo.

THE IRISH FOREST

When humans settled in Ireland about nine thousand years ago, it was a forested island. Oaks and elms covered the lower elevations; pines and birches grew in poorer soil. Ferns, moss, holly, ivy, bracken, fungi, and honeysuckle covered the forest floor. In the forests lived now-extinct bears, wild boar, and wolves.

There were still extensive forests in Ireland in the sixteenth century, but the arrival of Cromwell in 1650 initiated an era of wide-scale deforestation—beginning with a campaign to eliminate possible hideouts for Irish rebels. As English maritime power grew, timber was needed for shipbuilding. The reconstruction of London after the Great Fire of 1666 required vast amounts of wood, as did the manufacture of barrel staves, which were exported to France and Spain. Trees were burned to provide charcoal for blast furnaces used to smelt iron. The growth of the English plantations led to an increased demand for pasture and farm land.

"Order was being brought to this 'wolf land,' as they called it in the English Parliament at the time," says Stewart. "They saw our land as untamed. There were rebels and rebellions. In our story, it's a time of great environmental destruction: A huge amount of the native oak forests was cut down during this time."

In *Wolfwalkers*, the Irish forests are not only home to Mebh and her wolf tribe, but they also represent the struggle between the Irish people and the Lord Protector. To the Irish, the woods are an integral part of their homeland; to the Lord Protector, they are a symbol of the resistance and disorder he intends to subdue.

The significance of the forest meant it had to be immediately recognizable as an *Irish* forest. Moore explains, "A lot of our artists are not from Ireland or even the UK. Their idea of a forest is a Mediterranean forest, which is very dry with different vegetation: People naturally draw from their own memories. But it's important to see how wet an Irish forest is, how green it is all the time, even in autumn, when there are fallen leaves."

Concept and development artist Alice Dieudonné agrees. "Because I come from France, I tend to paint the forest I saw there. But Ross said to me, 'No, no, no. That's a French forest! We don't have these colours here.' He pushed me to find an Irish palette."

To help the artists understand the characteristic look of the Irish landscape, the filmmakers organized field trips so that people could sketch and take reference photographs. "The field trips were invaluable—as are the photos from those field trips," continues Moore. "We went to a place called Kilfane, where there's a sunken waterfall in a beautiful little valley. We were only supposed to go there for an hour or two, but people stayed nine or ten hours, until the sun went down."

"As animators, we sit eight hours a day in front of the computer, and we tend to look for pictures online," adds Dieudonné. "But going outside and seeing the light and the moss and the textures of things gives you a feeling for them. When you walk through the forest, you learn how it looks at different times of day and in different light."

Background final line supervisor, Eduardo Damasceno, who comes from Brazil, agrees: "I struggled to go from the feeling of a tropical forest to an Irish forest. You start to learn the names of the trees. Then, when you draw, you know what you're drawing. You make the oak leaves look like oak leaves. Everything feels brighter and nicer to draw because it makes more sense."

"We went to beautiful forests, and I got lost on one of the tours. I thought I would be there forever," he continues with a rueful laugh. "I had the idea of walking beyond the path to see the forest. Not my brightest idea, but it was nice."

"Ireland is called the Emerald Isle for a reason: It's very green because it rains all the time," concludes colour background supervisor Stefano Scapolan. "The undergrowth in the forest reflects the climate, which is cold and wet. You have trees covered in moss. You have shades of deep emerald and dark turquoise with the bright red of the leaves that have just fallen, because the film takes place in autumn. Autumn is difficult to capture anywhere, but in Ireland even more so!"

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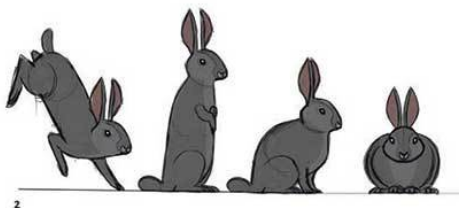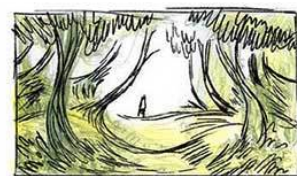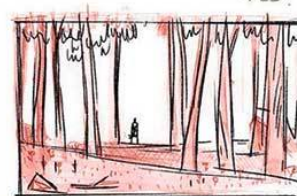
1 *This simple sketch indicates the curvilinear feel the forest should have—and the kind of static, rectilinear look the artists wanted to avoid. Artist: Almu Redondo.*

2 *Maria Pareja's drawings are clear and stylized, yet retain a rabbit's soft curves.*

OPPOSITE *Maria Pareja interprets the look of the forest.*

3 *A photograph shows the vibrant greens and rusty browns of the Irish forest.*

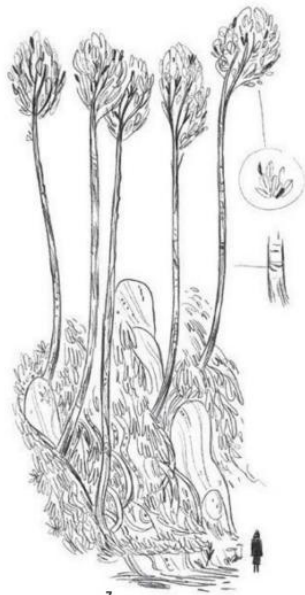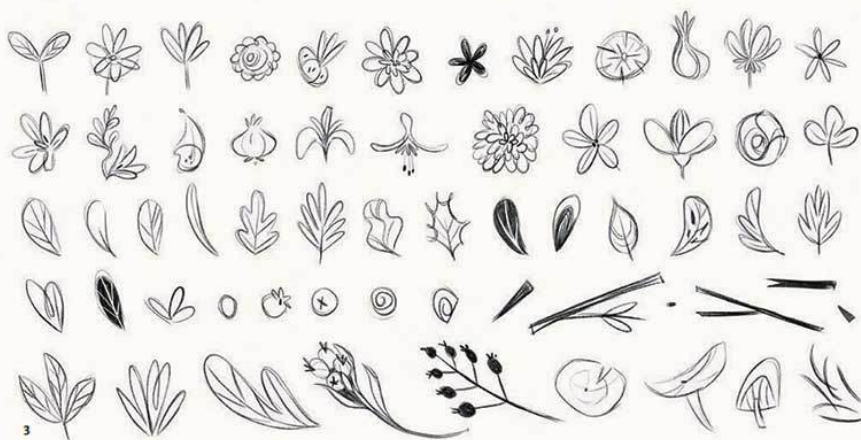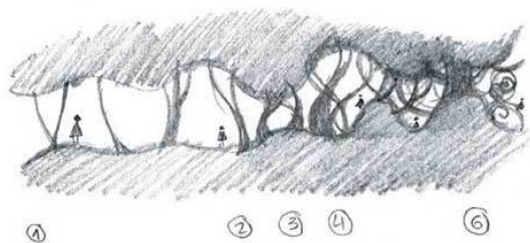8 *Robyn covertly watches her father hunting.*

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Every detail of the forest had to reflect the designers' aesthetic vision.

THIS PAGE *Appealing versions of birds, bugs, and animals. Artist: Maria Pareja.*

1 *Images from Ludovic Gavillet's sketchbook.*

2 *A study of a tree by Ludovic Gavillet.*

3–4 *Leaves, flowers, and a graceful tree. Artist: Maria Pareja.*

> roots grow
> multiple levels.

> more individual trees
> less thickness change
> more broken up space
> tree tops and bushes
  more uniform shape

1

> more tangled
> more roots + twigs
  (more connection)
> thicker spaces
> more depth
  (more change in size)
> tree tops and
  bushes more
  broken up

> ultra tangled
  roots and branches
  (ultra connected and flow)
> huge scale
> even more depth
> thicker trunks.

Less decorated ⟵   + magical

6 Inside Ravine – Lush! Big FG in composition!
Full flowers and bushes! ≠ shapes! Big rocks
with carvings.
2

4

1–2 Almu Redondo's pencil sketches follow
Robyn through various parts of the forest.

3 Mebh rides through the ravine Almu
Redondo describes. Artist: Maria Pareja.

4 Oak trees, ferns, and mushrooms all grow
in Irish forests. Artist: Maria Pareja.

5 A rock with mystic carvings emerges from the
greenery. Artist: Maria Pareja.

6 Maria Pareja's drawings show how the rocks
become larger and less angular as the characters
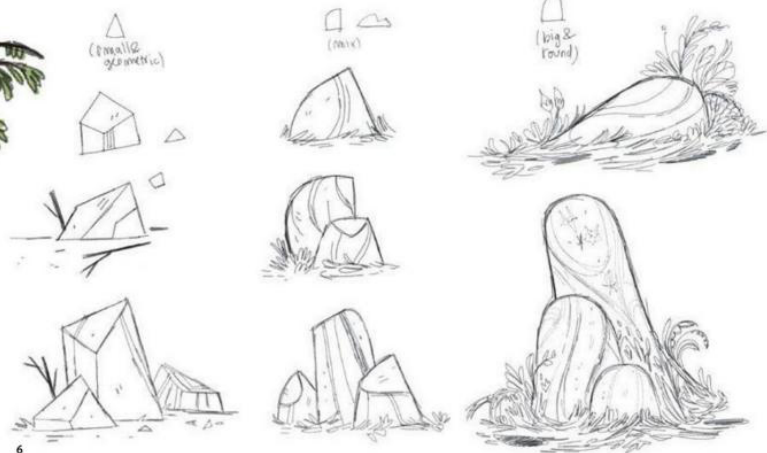move from the town to the forest.

7 Robyn enters the ravine. Artist: Alice Dieudonné.

8 An early study of the ravine. Artist: Maria Pareja.

5

ROCKS EVOLUTION
FROM TOWN TO DEEP FOREST
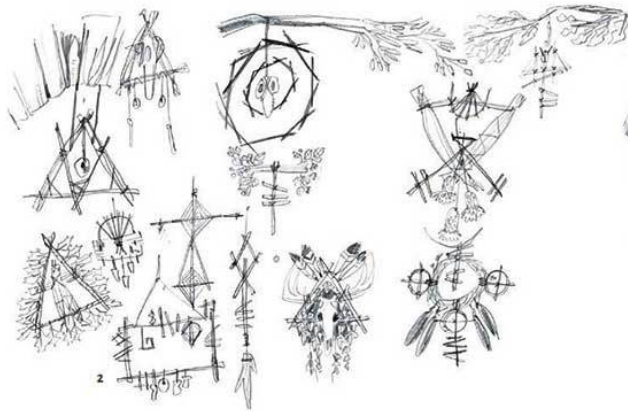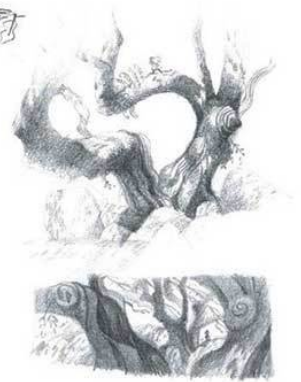
(small geometric)

(mix)

(big & round)

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1–2 *Alice Dieudonné's delicate sketches for the ravine have a feeling of Native American art.*

3 *One of the Wolfwalker traps at the end of a ravine pathway. Artist: Almu Redondo.*

4 *Four studies of tree trunks and branches. Artist: Almu Redondo.*

OPPOSITE *This painting of the ravine suggests a fusion of the natural and supernatural. Artist: Ross Stewart.*
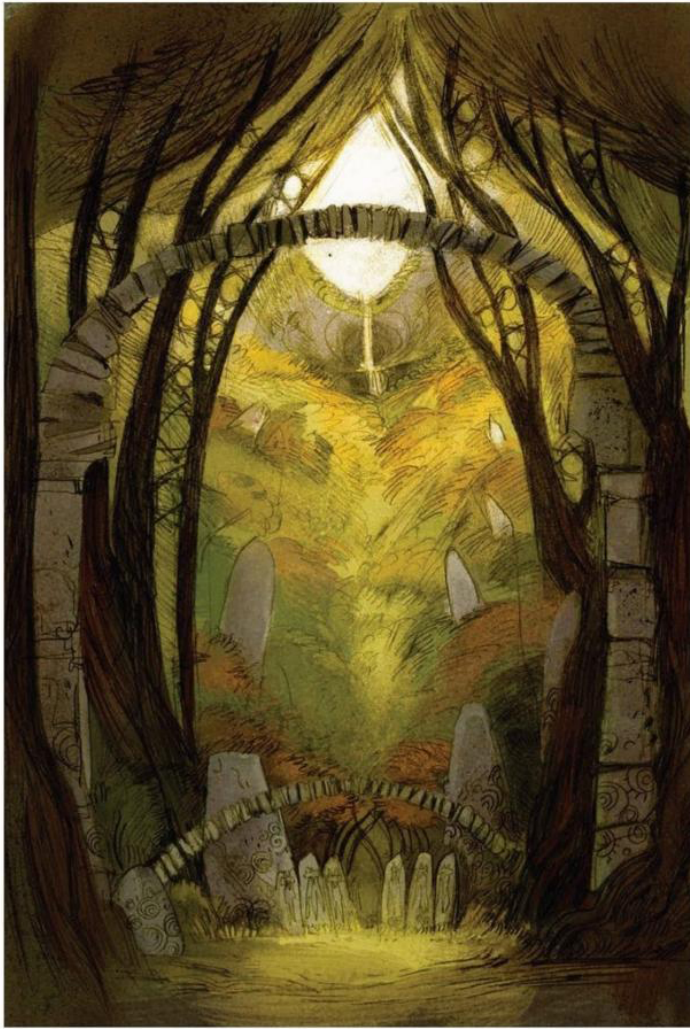
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The ravine is the heart of the wolf realm.

1–3 These delicate sketches seem to bring the viewer into the magical realm. Artist: Alice Dieudonné.

4 Camille Chao adds waterfalls and ponds to increase the sense of peace.
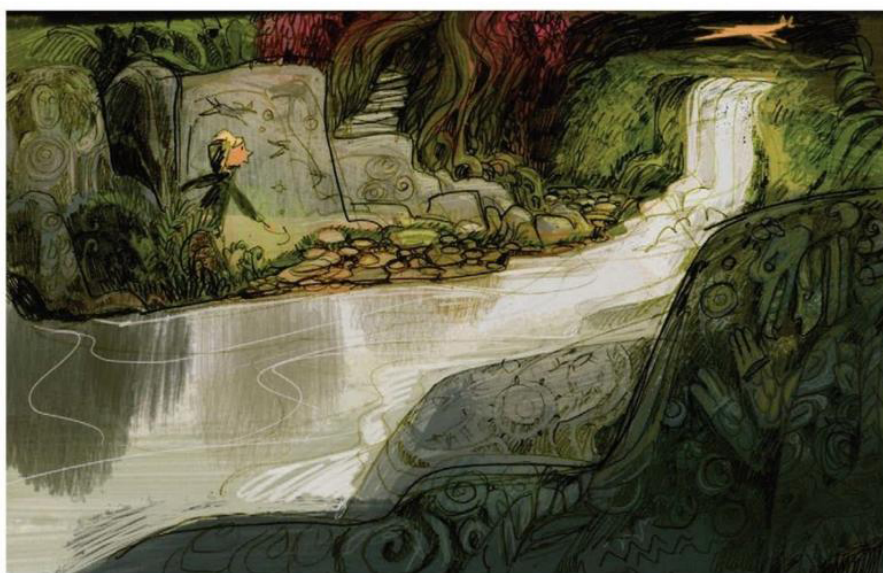
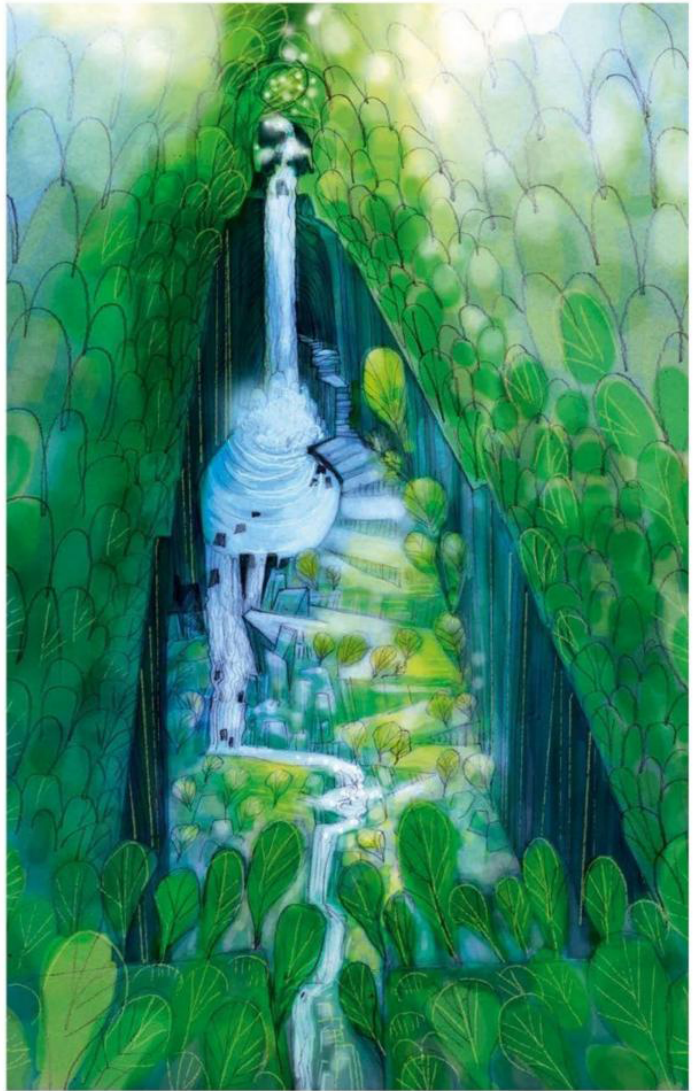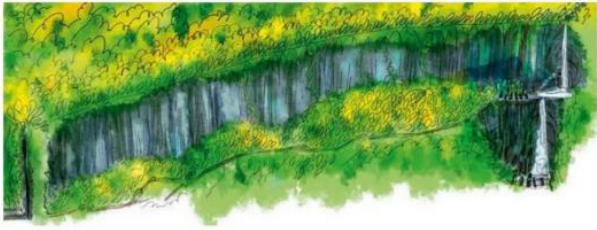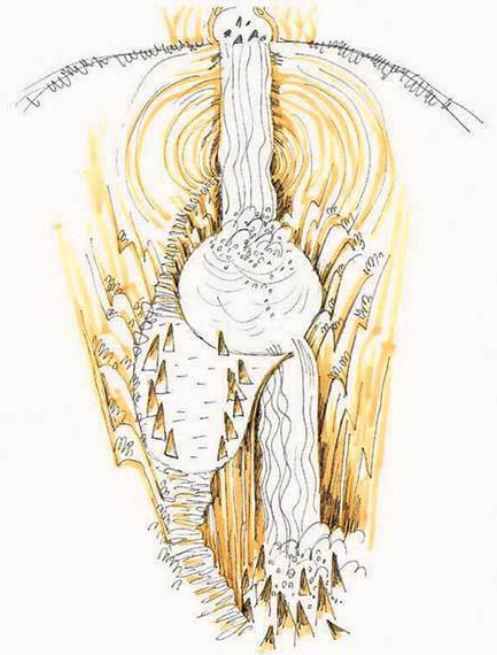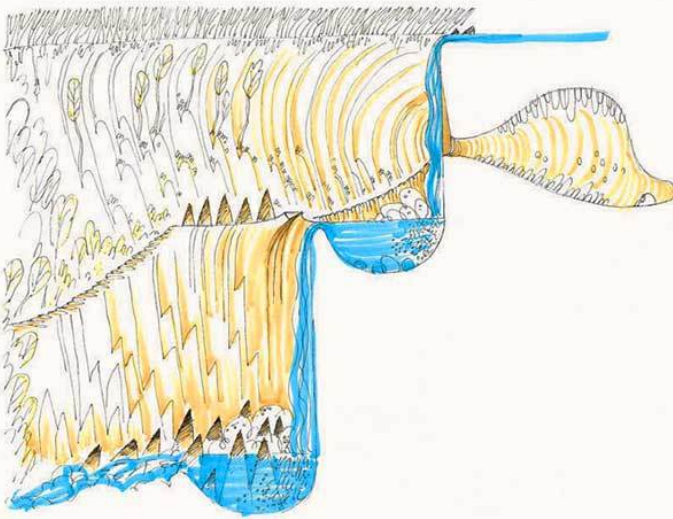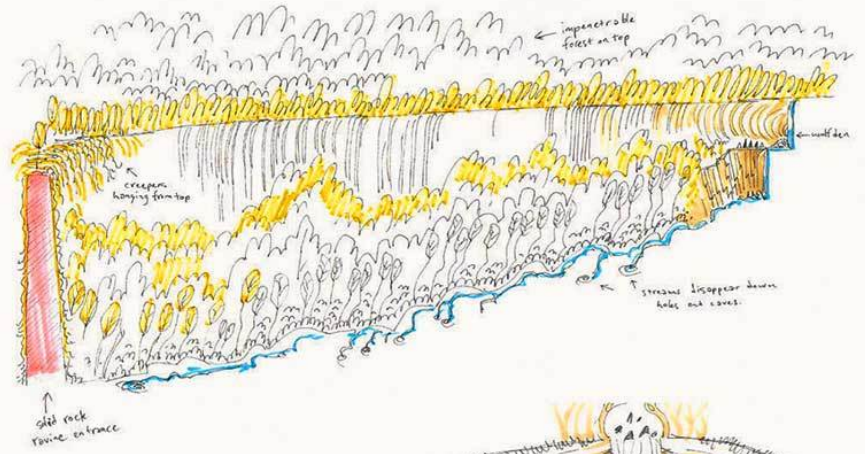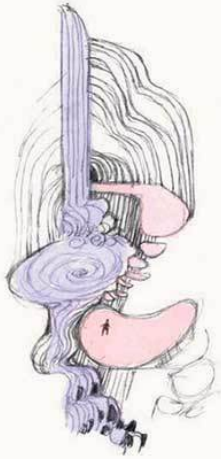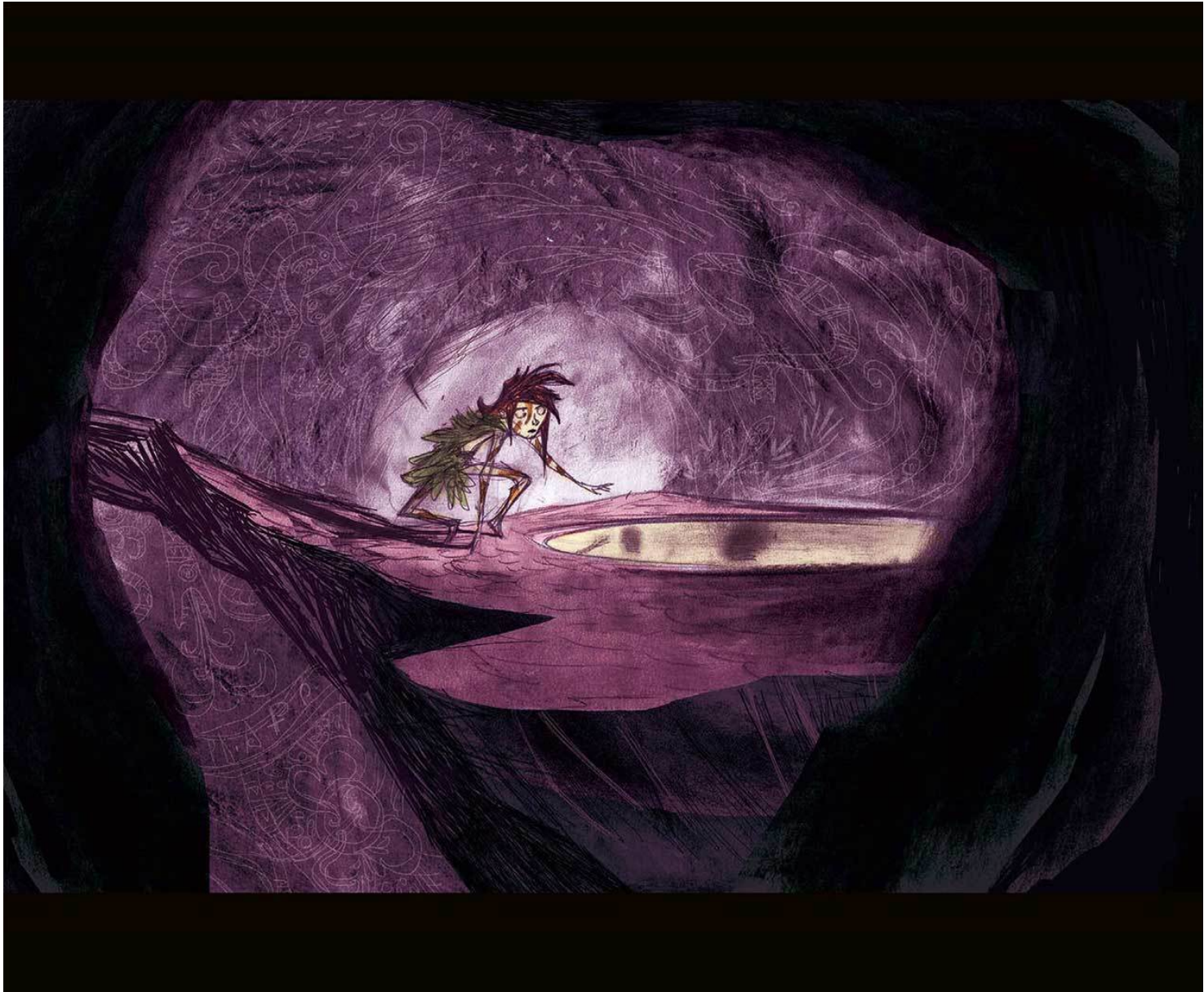**5** A finished background of the ravine by Ludovic Gavillet.

4

5

"We had to tell the artists from warmer countries to imagine their socks were wet from walking in the grass."

ROSS STEWART, CO-DIRECTOR

THIS SPREAD *In these small, lovely studies, Alice Dieudonné and Ross Stewart capture the wonder Robyn feels on her journey to the ravine.*
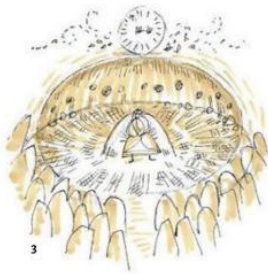
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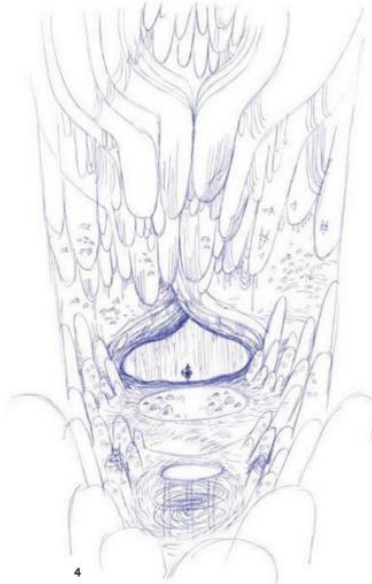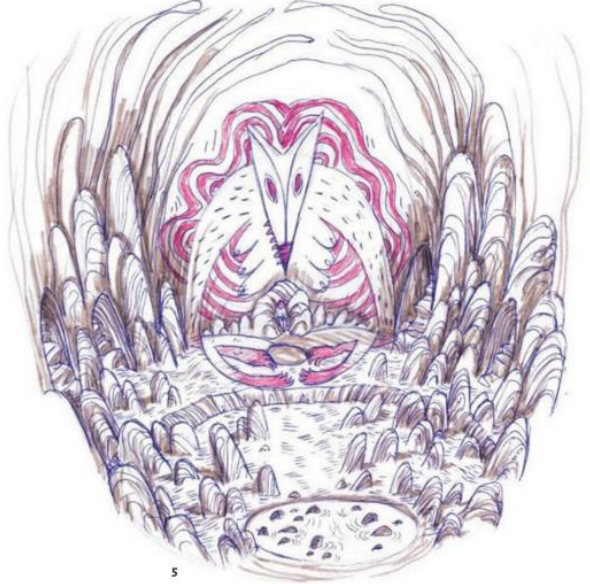
OPPOSITE *Mebh arrives at the inner chamber of the ravine; the decorations suggest Aboriginal art. Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.*

1 *In contrast, these sketches for the stones recall Native American petroglyphs. Artist: Salomé Hammann.*

2 *The delicate pastel tones emphasize the magical power of the cavern. Artist: Lily Bernard.*

3 *A small sketch stresses the presence of the menhir-like stones. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

4 *Ross Stewart imbues the rocks with an organic feel.*

5 *A painting of a stylized wolf dominates this drawing. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

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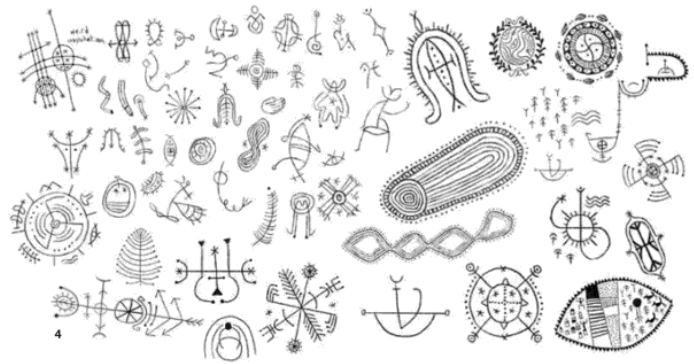
What would the art of the Wolf-people look like?

1–4 *Salomé Hammann experiments with imagery reflecting the influence of Celtic, Native American, and medieval European art.*

5 *Maria Pareja explores forms that recall the yin-yang symbol.*

6 *A drawing by Camille Chao shows how the ravine fits into the surrounding cliffs.*

7 *Cave art of wolves interacting with human hunters. Artist: Alice Dieudonné.*

8–9 *The contours of Moll's throne echo the forms of the sleeping wolves. Artist: Lily Bernard.*

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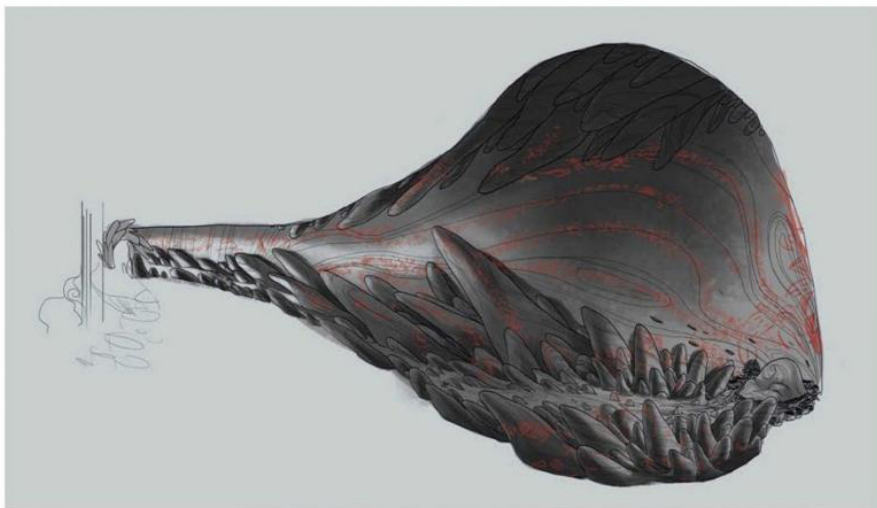
1 An uncertain Mebh and Robyn join Moll,
who sits in her trance, guarded by the wolf pack.
Artist: Camille Chao.

2 The depths of the wolf cave. Scene illustration
by Maria Pareja.

3, 4, AND OPPOSITE Although similar, Lily
Bernard's three studies of Moll and Mebh on the
throne offer nuanced differences in tone and mood.

VI. Layout and Background

The work of the layout artist suggests a combination of set design and cinematography. The layout artists organize the ideas of the designers, visual development, and storyboard artists into a form the rest of the crew can use to realize the directors' vision for the film.

Before a scene goes into production, the layout artists prepare the workbook drawings that describe the camera moves, the levels of animation and effects, the character's path of action, the light source(s), and so on. Layout drawings do not appear in the finished film; they serve as guides for the artists as they work. If an artist doesn't follow the layout, a character may end up too far away from the door to exit or the scene may not link up with the ones before and after it.

The highly stylized look of *WolfWalkers* posed special challenges—and offered special opportunities. Layout supervisor Leo Weiss explains, "There are certain things you can and cannot do in this style that you could in a realistic 3-D environment. Complex camera moves with lots of depth are very difficult to achieve. But that forces us to find creative solutions. Those questions have to be dealt with in layout, quite early in the production process."

The layout artists work in black and white. If the composition of a scene can be read clearly, it will probably remain clear when colour is added. Weiss says, "When building the layouts in black and white, you can check the contrast and see if the silhouette reads well. Is it dark against bright or is it muddy and even? Desaturating things helps you analyze whether the contrast is interesting or if it could be improved."

The organic, curvilinear world of the forest posed special problems. "For the wolves, you'd leave the area where the characters are going to be relatively empty because the tiny leaves in the forest can get very busy very quickly," Weiss continues. "If you want the character to read well, you put it in a quiet spot. Playing with these zones of contrast shows the characters and action better."

The city of Kilkenny beyond the studio's windows was a continuing source of inspiration and reference, but the artists didn't want to depict the town literally. It served as a jumping-off point for their imaginations.

"The style of the film is very graphic, so there's no need to match the architecture too precisely," says Weiss. "Some of the elements in the real Kilkenny helped to create believable designs, but those designs are very stylized. Still, if you grew up in a medieval village, you'd recognize these shapes."

When lead layout artist Antonia Gancheva did research on the historic city, she discovered that seventeenth-century Kilkenny was divided into three areas: St. John's Suburb (a walled neighborhood on the other side of the river), Irishtown (the main city), and Hightown (near the castle). She used the information to create designs that reflect both the physical and social structure of Kilkenny.

"We start with the poorer houses near the gates, which have been further beaten up in the Lord Protector's invasion," she explains. "I added more traditional Irish cottages to this area and suggested we use thatched roofs, with wattle and daub and wood as building materials. We limited the buildings to a maximum of two floors. The windows are covered with wooden shutters and/or greased cloth instead of glass.

"In Irishtown, we have merchant buildings, more elaborate market stalls, and a few snug cottages," she adds. "Glass windows and chimneys start to appear; the building materials shift to brick, stone, and wood. More intricate detailing marks the houses of the wealthy in Hightown. In the seventeenth century you would show off your wealth by having glass windows, which were not only expensive but also heavily taxed."

Background artists need the talents of both a set designer and an easel painter to render believable landscapes and interiors. The imagery in their paintings has to match the layouts: The most beautifully

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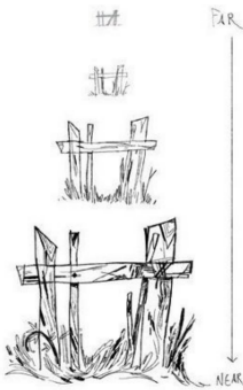
NEAR

OPPOSITE *Although the night looks peaceful, the division between geometrized town and curvilinear forest is clearly shown. Line by Laura Dong; colour by Ludovic Gavillet.*

ABOVE *A study of stylized fences retreating in perspective. Artist: Leo Weiss.*

rendered palace interior is useless if the door or the stairs are in the wrong place for the action. Once the director has OK'd the layouts for a sequence, the background artists go to work.

For *WolfWalkers*, the background department had a team of artists who focused on the linework, preserving the two-line style of the film.

"Once the scene and its setting are planned, it goes to the background department, where everything's painted," says Eduardo Damasceno, background final line supervisor. "But for *WolfWalkers*, the directors demanded certain lines. We get the layouts and draw a final line before it goes to colour. That line shows on the final background. In the forest, it's a pencil line that feels organic, like a traditional drawing; in the city, it's a woodcut line. Tomm and Ross wanted to see those lines on the screen."
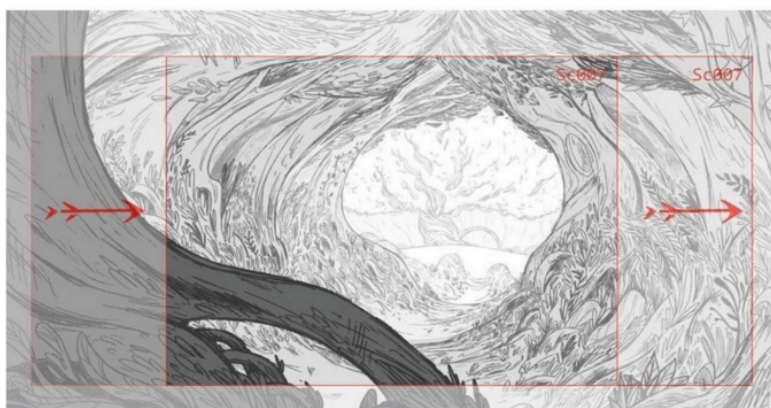
"The layout team creates the compositions according to the storyboards, but they don't put everything in the film's style—that's something I do," explains Camille Tinguy, background final line lead. "They compose the main elements of the backgrounds. When I get the file, I put a piece of paper on top of it and draw the final line, preparing the material for the next team, who'll do the colour. There are different styles in the movie. Even the forest changes: Some parts have more curves."

"Our department works mostly with traditional media: We do everything by hand on paper," adds Damasceno. "Every forest background is drawn in pencil; every city background is in ink. The main thing is to keep everything looking like a traditional drawing and not clean it up too much. Not every line is perfect. When we scan artwork into Photoshop, we sometimes add small bits of dirt around the lines."

To complement the graphic designs of the characters, the backgrounds were designed as a succession of levels to create an illusion of depth. Walt Disney's artists developed a comparable technique in the 1930s with the multiplane camera: Elements of the background were painted on sheets of glass that might be positioned a few inches or several feet apart. But the multiplane camera was difficult and expensive to use. Computer technology allows the Cartoon Saloon artists to achieve a similar effect more efficiently.

"Because the artwork looks flat, we're creating a multiplane effect," Damasceno explains. "You break the perspective sometimes and have a Cubist view of some objects, which helps vary the flatness while adding character to the drawings.

"Kilkenny is supposed to look like a cage much of the time. So we end up with a lot of verticals and horizontals—a lot of grids," he continues. "The characters are supposed to feel trapped when they're in the city and feel free when they're in the forest. For the forest, I thought about how Tyrus Wong made the forest look cozy yet wild in *Bambi*."

"It was a struggle to get the lines and the colour to work together properly," says art director Maria Pareja. "The town style is clearer: You do the block-print look, and it's fine. But the forest has the sketchy, loose style: Not everyone draws that way naturally, so they had to practice a bit more. All the different plants and the trees with their different bark means there's a lot of variations. While we needed that variety, it couldn't look like different forests."

Like the designers, the background artists had to make sure their work was immediately recognizable as an Irish forest. Stewart comments, "Layout artist Pauline Gagniarre loves being in the wilds with Nature. She was very knowledgeable about the different types of plants and put so much natural detail in her layouts. Many animation artists are used to doing made-up things, rather than starting with real species and stylizing them. We tried to get the artists to look at the real plant first, then stylize it."

"It's just like life drawing," agrees Moore. "If you're not practicing all the time, you think an arm goes one way. It's only when you see the model and try to draw an arm that you understand. It's about drawing from life: You have to remind yourself because your imagination isn't faithful to reality."

Once the linework was completed, the backgrounds moved on to the painters. Colour background supervisor Stefano Scapolan

"The main goal of layout is to make the character as readable as possible in a scene. The composition should work toward that, the silhouette should work toward that. Anything that interferes with the readability shouldn't be there. The character should be at the center of the viewer's attention: Look here!"

LEO WEISS,
LAYOUT SUPERVISOR
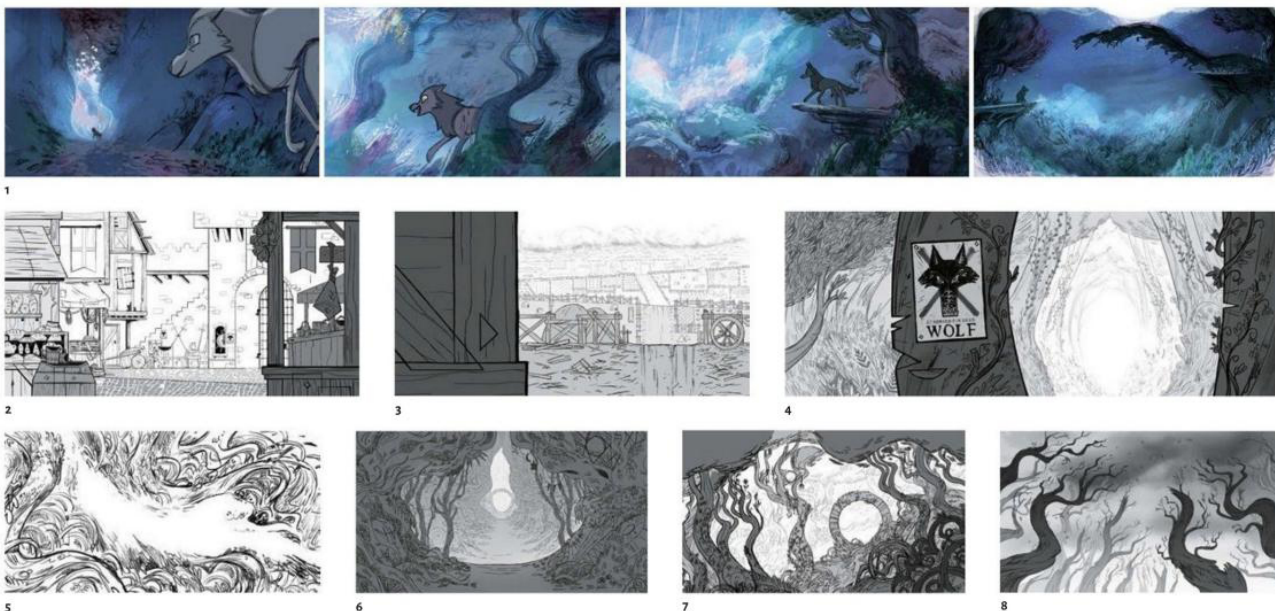
recalls, "Wherever the linework is the most detailed, our work is the simplest because we can just focus on big broad shapes of colour. Otherwise, you won't see the colour and you won't see the line—it's going to become a mess. The more intense the line, the less we need in terms of colour.

"Lots of planning was involved. Apart from the colour sketch done in pre-production, each sequence requires a new colour sketch with the final linework in place," he explains. "For each shot, we map how the colour needs to be placed, especially in the complicated woodcut style in the city. We're directing the eye of the viewer to where the action is taking place, so we don't always paint between the lines. In the areas where we want the viewer's attention to be focused, the painting is between the lines; farther back, the colour and the linework start to dis-align."

The artists take pride in the fact that the background is hand-painted, with only minor corrections added in the computer. Following the examples set in the colour script and scene illustra-tions, the background artists used colour to heighten the emotional impact of their paintings—and the story.

"In one set of sequences, there's a sunset lighting the castle square," explains Scapolan. "The colour progression is almost a realistic sunset: It took more than fifty backgrounds. There's an emotional buildup in that moment. We have the strong red of the sun coming through the gate, which frames where the action takes place."

The artists also shifted the style of painting from scene to scene: Even the individual brushstrokes support the emotions of the charac-ters. Scapolan adds, "In the wolf attack, where there's aggression and confusion, the style becomes very rough: We switch from soft water-colour to dry brush. The colour palette is reduced and the contrast enhanced. Everything gets an extra kick from the way it's painted.

"Tomm and Ross really treasured the final look," he concludes. "They had a vision from the beginning, and they kept to it. It involved a lot of linework, but that's how they wanted it to look, and that's how it looks."

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"Trying to marry the linework in the backgrounds with the linework on the characters was a huge task. We had to ensure the elements that make the backgrounds ric[h] aren't making them the most important things in the shot. The background needs to complement the animation, to enhance the path of action, and ensure the characters are setting the mood."

STEFANO SCAPOLAN,
COLOUR BACKGROUND
SUPERVISOR

OPPOSITE *Leo Weiss's notes and drawings demonstrate how the layout artists work out the staging of a sequence. The characters' relation to the settings and how the areas where the action takes place relate to each other must be clear to both the filmmakers and the audience. Various artists.*

1 *Artist: Ross Stewart.*

2 *Artist: Leo Weiss.*

3 *The trees change as the scene moves away from the town to the farther and wilder parts of the forest. Artist: Ross Stewart.*

Forest Map

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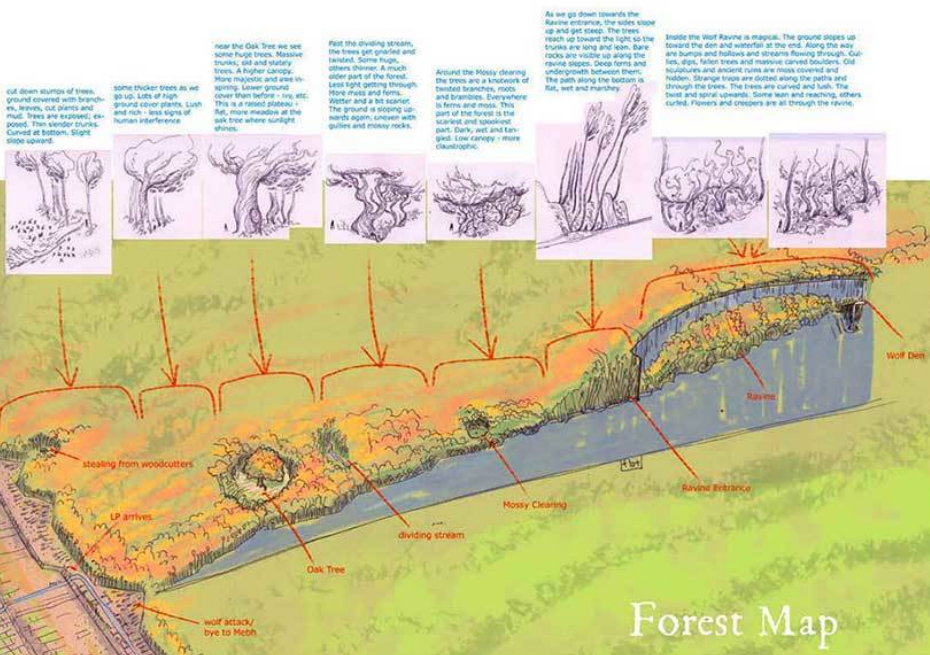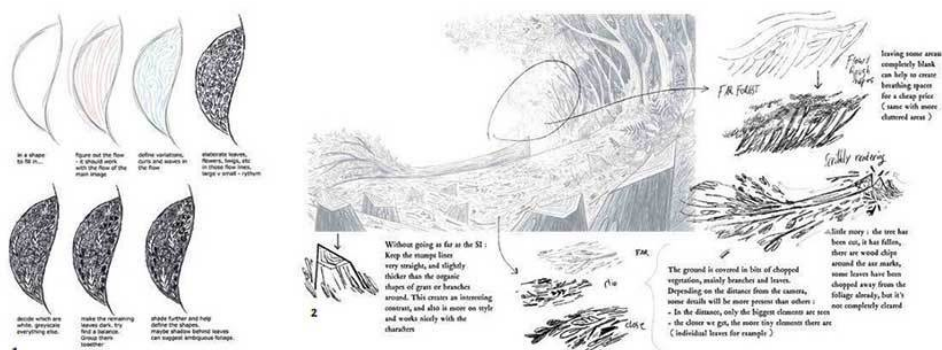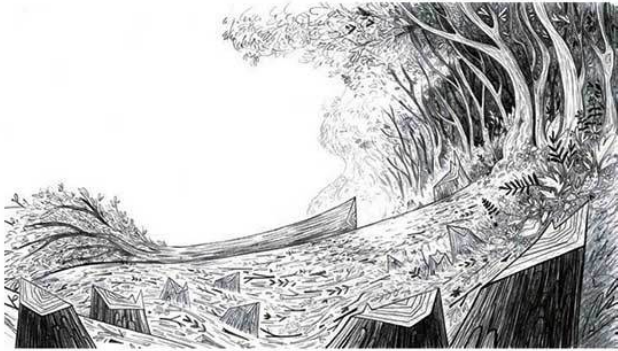
OPPOSITE *The edge of the forest, where logging is taking place. The angular tree stumps show the setting is near town and being taken over by humans.*

1 *A line drawing of the background.*

2 *The painted background.*

3 *The final scene with the characters in place. Artist: Ludovic Gavillet.*

4 *"Tidy" is a relative term for working artists….*

5 *The line drawing of a background in Kilkenny.*

6 *The painted background.*

7 *The final scene with the characters. Line by Clara Avedillo; colour by Enora Le Luheme.*
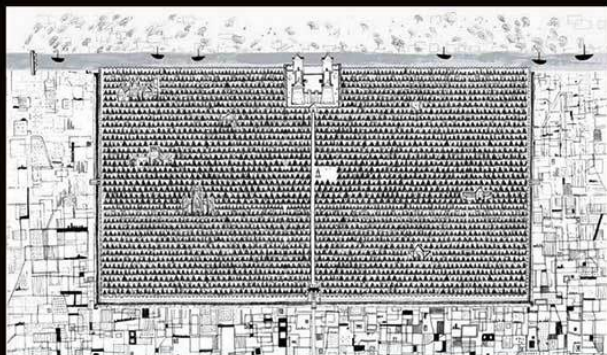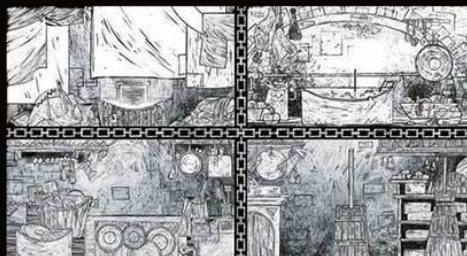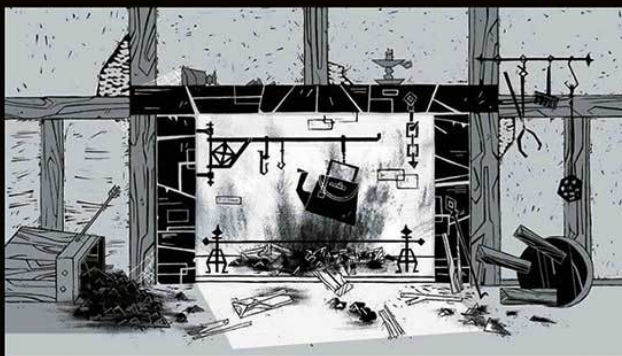
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These line studies for the backgrounds capture the differing looks of the two worlds. The town (this page) is rectilinear, angular, and strictly organized. The crossbeams and patterns suggest cages and chains. The forest (opposite) features curving forms that recall art nouveau and Celtic illuminations.

1 Artist: Eduardo Damasceno.

2 Artist: Emilie Bach.

3 Artist: Clara Avedillo.

4 Artist: Jean Baptiste Vendamme.

5 Artist: Alice Dieudonné.

6 Artist: Marti Furgber.

7 Artist: Héléna Loudjani.

8 Artist: Gráinne Rose Fordham.

9 Artist: Camille Tinguy.

10 Artist: Morgane Tissier.

11 Artist: Laura Dong.

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Background paintings of the town reflect the rectilinear style with its woodblock-inspired linework. The artists use perspective, design, and colour to create a believable space that conveys a feeling of confinement and even claustrophobia.

1 The stylization extends to the cat perched atop the chimney at the upper right. Line by Clara Avedillo; colour by Ludovic Gavillet.

2 Sequence colour sketches by colour background supervisor Stefano Scapolan informed the background artists of the correct starting point for their scenes.

3 Line by Emile Bach; colour by Geneviève Penloup.

4 Line by Clara Avedillo and Eduardo Damasceno; colour by Almu Redondo.

5 Line by Marti Furgber and Eduardo Damasceno; colour by Almu Redondo.

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The curving, organic forms and freer linework seem to embrace the characters—and the viewer—without encumbering them. The green and orange palette of the daytime scenes reflect the colours of an Irish forest in autumn.

1 Line and colour by Ludovic Gavillet.

2 Line by Alice Dieudonné; colour by Almu Redondo and Stefano Scapolan.

3 Line by Emilie Bach; colour by Laurence Gavroy.

THIS PAGE The blues, grays, and golds of the nighttime scenes suggest a magical realm where a shape-shifting character would feel at home.

4 Line by Emilie Bach; colour by Hortense Mariano and Stefano Scapolan.

5 Line and colour by Maria Pareja.

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VII. Animation

OPPOSITE *Robyn's spirit, which has roamed
the streets and forests as a wolf, returns to her
body. Artist: Maria Pareja.*

Animation is an art form with principles but no rules. No textbook or class dictates how a girl will walk through a forest, with a fixed number of drawings for each step. Working from experience and observation, each animator imagines the girl in the forest and creates movements that reflect her personality, thoughts, emotions, and actions. The director must ensure the work of the individual animators blends into a seamless vision. Each artist has a part to play, but every part must be integrated into the story.

"Posing" is an important term in animation that's used in different ways. Some directors choose poses for the characters at key points in a scene. Tomm Moore would look for poses that clearly showed what the character was doing and thinking, telegraphing the essential points in the scene to the audience. A strong pose will read even in silhouette.

Building on this idea, he introduced scene posing at Cartoon Saloon when he began work on the studio's first feature, *The Secret of Kells*. The animation was contracted to studios in several European countries and Brazil. To ensure a unified vision, he adapted an approach used at the Warner Bros. Studios for their hilarious *Looney Tunes* shorts in the 1940s and 1950s.

"Posing was something we started on *Kells* because we weren't sure how we were going to keep animation from studios scattered around Europe consistent," Moore says. "The poses are not the keys: The animators are free to change them. We looked at the way Chuck Jones posed out scenes. His animators might change the angle of a head, but Chuck's drawings controlled the overall short."

To supervise the posing for *WolfWalkers*, Tomm and Ross chose Andrzej Radka, an artist with thirty years of experience, "because his draftsmanship gave the animators a really strong scaffold to build the performances on." By suggesting the key movements in each scene, the posing artists enable the directors to see how the finished scene will look before it's animated.

"Whenever I try to describe my position, people think my crew is doing the key poses for the animators, but we're not," says Radka. "We're translating the storyboards, but with the right models, the right scale, the right backgrounds. We prepare all the information the animators need to start work. We try to give them poses they can use, although they don't have to follow them exactly."

"It's a weird in-between of storyboard and animation," agrees lead posing artist Sandra Andersen. "Since we don't have an enormous budget, we have to work smart. Posing is like doing the keys for the scene. You have to understand the characters. You have to listen to the director. You have to make sure the character looks good and is consistently on model, so it's clear for whomever gets it next."

"When you had to show a character from an angle that didn't exist on the model sheet, the posing artists would do a drawing to help you," says Jeanne-Sylvette Giraud, animation supervisor at Studio Folivari. "But we could draw around the poses. They weren't something we had to stick to exactly. They helped us understand what the character would look like in this position, from this angle. Once we understood that, we had some freedom."

Nicolas Debray, animation supervisor at Studio 352, adds, "When I'd hand a scene to an animator, I'd say, 'These poses have been approved by the director: work around them.' It saves a lot of time to begin with the right pose: It gives us a starting point, and a good animator can milk that pose."

Poses also play a key role in the animation itself. Most animation is done "pose to pose": Using drawings from the director and storyboard artists—and their own imaginations—the animators find the poses that express the key elements in the character's movements. Where do weight shifts and changes in balance occur? When is the character moving faster or slower? In a dialogue scene, which words are stressed? Other drawings link the poses to create fluid, believable movement.

Brad Bird, the director of *The Iron Giant*, visited master Disney animator Milt Kahl while he was working on Madame Medusa in *The Rescuers*. "He would fill a page with sketches of variations of one pose," Bird remembers. "They looked identical until you examined them closely, then you'd see all these little variations—in one, her shoulder would be a little higher; in another, a little lower. He was constantly searching for the clearest possible statement."

The films of Cartoon Saloon are noted for similar clarity in their stylized designs. During the 1950s, the artists at the UPA Studio were inspired by the work of Picasso, Matisse, Modigliani, Saul Steinberg, and other contemporary artists. They discovered that stylized, two-dimensional figures couldn't move in three-dimensional space the way the rounded figures in a Disney film could: Their movements had to be as stylized as their designs. These discoveries influenced artists from Marcell Jankovics (*Son of the White Mare*) to Genndy Tartakovsky (*Samurai Jack*), both of whom Moore cites as influences.

"We think about the movements and avoid difficult turns of the head, which could look confusing because of the flatness of the image," Radka explains. "Each character has special rules about moving, acting, and drawing. Whenever I think about posing a scene, I try to explain it with two or three drawings. It's easy for slow dialogue scenes, but with action, it can get complicated. I always try to think as an animator: What would I need to start the scene?"

"We're taking the essence of the storyboards and layouts, figuring out what's needed for the scene, then giving the animators the right poses," adds Andersen. "In the beginning, we did a lot of posing—maybe a bit too much—because the animators were new to the characters. Later, we tried to do as few poses as needed."

"I think everybody had an easier time with Mebh than Robyn," she continues. "Robyn is very skinny. She has a big forehead, so she's difficult to turn around in space. Mebh is more like a ball, with a triangle for a body and a lot of hair. She's practically a line of action, which is much easier to understand."

Moore describes the posing department "as a sort of funnel: You have fewer people who specialize in design doing the posing, so the animators can focus on the performances."

Rough animation supervisor Svend Rothmann Bonde helps to coordinate the scene posing and animation departments: "I'm in the meetings where they kick off each sequence in posing, where we talk about what's needed for the animation. The posing team has been creating a lot of material for the animators to work from. We want to find that balance for the animators, not giving them too much, so they feel like they're just in-betweening those poses."

Bonde held weekly Skype meetings with the supervisors at Folivari and Studio 352. He and the directors visited those studios to ensure consistency and boost morale. Although the animators in Luxembourg and France might not have felt the same ties to the story as the Irish artists, they all recognized the film's potential.

"For me, it goes beyond the geographical ties," says Debray. "It's a good story with great characters. What I really appreciated about *WolfWalkers* was the depth of feeling and the layering of emotions within the scenes. I've probably had the most fun in my whole career with some of the scenes, especially the ones between Bill and Robyn. Bill's angry, but he's angry because he's scared for her, then he mellows down throughout the scene. For an animator, that's gold, something you can't wait to dive into."

In traditional 2-D animation, the animators will do the key drawings in a scene, then pass it on to assistants who do the "in-between" drawings, ensuring fluid, consistent motion. The director must decide which artists should animate a given character. It's less a question of which artist is "better" than whose work conveys the feeling the story requires. Some animators specialize in heroes or heroines, others in comic characters or animals. In some studios, a single animator is cast as a lead and oversees all of one character's scenes. In others, the director assigns the animation by shot, and each animator works with all the characters in the scene.

"We work by scene," says Bonde. "The animation team is split up over three studios in three different places, but we have animators who are very good at animating wolves, we have people who are very good at animating Bill, and so on. So we cast, but we didn't really set up one team for Robyn, one team for Mebh."

"Sometimes on longer performance shots, we'll have one animator rough it all out, then keep going on one character and have someone else do the other," adds Stewart. "But most of the time, the animators do the whole scene themselves. We assign it based on their skills. Anita Gaughan and Geoff King are very good at quadrupeds. Mathilde Vachet and Diane Coat are very sensitive in their animation of the girls, so we tried to give them those scenes. We tend to give more of the Mebh scenes to Mathilde, and ask Emmanuel Asquier to do the more complex mixes of effects and character.

"We struggled with the design of the wolves because they felt constrained, and we wanted something wild and loose," he continues. "When Federico [Pirovano, character designer] started drawing them, they felt free and loose with exactly the energy we wanted."

"I was coasting along, doing what we've done before on the wolf designs until Federico brought us his take," replies Moore. "It helps

"I try to deepen the characters, to give them life. What we have is just a drawing and a script, but through good timing and good poses and expressions, we can give the characters real emotions and a real life."

ABOVE *A drawing of Moll evokes medieval illuminations. Artist: Salomé Hammann.*

OPPOSITE *The pose artists stress the relationships among the characters.*

1–2 *Bill as a stern but loving father to Robyn. Artist: Andrzej Radka.*

3–4 *The Lord Protector asserts his authority over Bill. Artist: Federico Pirovano.*

5 *Robyn and Mebh's friendship has its fractious moments. Artist: Andrzej Radka.*

6 *Moll as an all-embracing maternal figure. Artist: Sandra Andersen.*
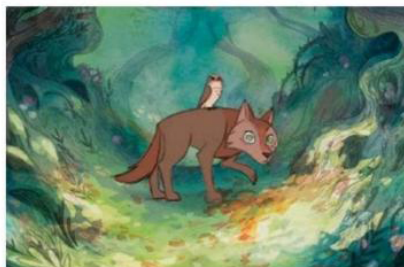
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with the storytelling that there's a different kind of animation for the wild creatures. Conversely, we lean more on clockwork-like poses to animate the soldiers. There are different animation styles for the different characters."

One major challenge the film presented was keeping Robyn and Mebh consistent in both their human and wolf forms. "It was a long process to find the right version of a wolf for each girl, so there would be no doubt you were seeing the same character," explains Radka. "Robyn is an educated girl from a good family, with manners. So, as a wolf, she has a more aristocratic way of moving, while Mebh is a wild thing. Tomm says she's somewhere between a crazy squirrel and a little girl. So she moves with much more energy."

"We handled part of the sequence in which Robyn becomes a wolf for the first time," says Giraud. "She didn't feel at ease in this new body. Sometimes she'd jump and miss her landing. She suddenly goes from being a human child to having very long, slender legs and tiny feet that make her movements awkward at times. She can't move her legs the way a truly wild creature would."

Bonde notes, "As Robyn is more contained as a human, when she's a wolf, she's also a little more contained, a little clumsier. Whereas Mebh is this kind of arms spread, running around being goofy figure. We're trying as much as we can to connect the wolf characters with their human counterparts. There were some moments where we had Robyn behave too much like a boy, like Brendan or Ben. It was definitely something we needed to think about."

"It was a challenge, but I think that's what makes animators animators," agrees Debray. "An actor is stuck with what he looks like: We can be whatever we want. I did the sequence of the two girls speaking under the tree. I hate to brag, but having them wag their tails was my idea. I put it in and thought, 'Maybe Tomm's going to hate me for this; if he does, we can get rid of it.' But he loved it, and we found it helped

us connect with the characters. I started pretty timidly, then went further and further with the canine aspects of the movements. All the little things that make them feel like they're wolves, but also little girls."

The directors carefully oversaw the performances of the major— and minor—characters. Bonde continues, "Tomm and Ross are very, very involved. Every day we have reviews, which last from five minutes to an hour. They'll comment on anything from broad aspects of a shot to little details. But the focus is the emotion, the acting."

The flattened, graphic designs can pose challenges for the animators. But, Giraud notes, "The design of a character suggests the way that character will move. The lines in Bill's design are strong, solid, and straight. You know from the design there's a rigidity in the way he moves. It allows you to show the very tight control he keeps over himself. But when he gets emotional, he moves much more freely, which shows something is happening internally. In contrast, Mebh's design is so round, as soon as you see it, you know you can stretch and squash and go for a very cartoony style of animation—which was exactly what the director wanted."

"Tomm and Ross are very focused on silhouette and clarity," Bonde adds. "These designs help because they're so clear. We've found the easiest approach is to let the animators animate the characters without thinking too much about the graphics. Afterward, they can go in and flatten things. It gives us a result that feels volumetric but still true to the design. It's challenging, but it's also what makes hand-drawn interesting: You can play with these things and cheat a lot, like Mickey Mouse's ears, which appear round no matter which way he turns his head."

Whether using a pencil on paper or a stylus on a digital table, no two animators draw the same way. One artist draws loose, scribbly forms; another uses light strokes to limn a few delicate lines. But the drawings must all look the same in the finished film. Once the

ABOVE *Mebh performs the same movement as a wolf and as a girl. Various Artists.*

OPPOSITE *Even the effects reflect the graphic division between the natural world of the forest and the human world of the town.*

1 *Water that falls from a bucket in Kilkenny forms constrained shapes. Artist: Maria Pareja.*
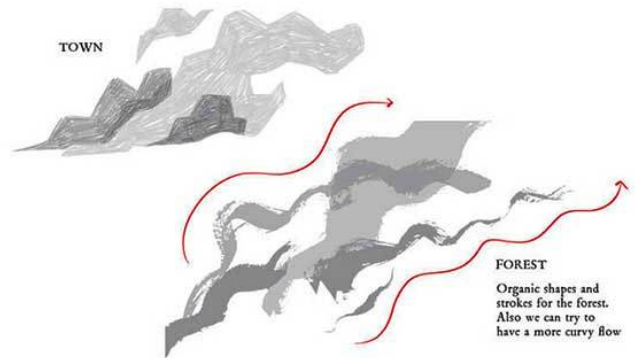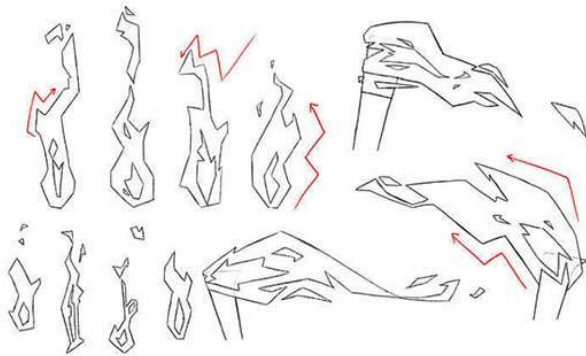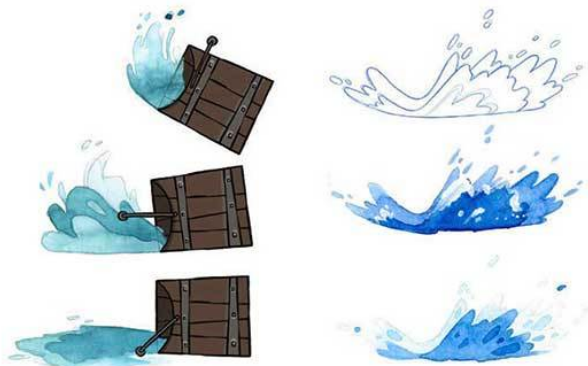
2 *When Robyn and Mebh splash around in a forest pond, the water assumes curving forms. Artist: Maria Pareja.*

3 *A dramatic study of Lord Protector confronting a wolf before a huge waterfall. Artist: Maria Pareja.*

4 *As fire is generated by humans, the flames have an angular look in these preliminary drawings. Artist: Maria Pareja.*

5 *Smoke takes on more organic, curving shapes as it moves through the forest. Artist: Maria Pareja.*

6 *Mebh and Robyn play amid leaves that fly in graceful patterns. Artist: Maria Pareja.*

TOWN

FOREST
Organic shapes and
strokes for the forest.
Also we can try to
have a more curvy flow

rough animation has been approved it's sent to clean-up, where artists trace the roughs using neat, single lines. If Mebh has three leaves over her left ear in a scene, the clean-up artists make sure those leaves are in the exact same place in every drawing, even when she turns her head. Giraud praises the clean-up crew for the "amazing work they did with this unique, demanding style of design."

"We concentrate on those strong, key poses. Once you've got strong keys all the way through, you can get away with certain things in between," says clean-up animation supervisor John Walsh.

All the artists agree that WolfWalkers is a challenging, visually complicated film. Walsh continues, "It all comes down to the complexity of the scenes: You've got packs of wolves—there could be fifteen, twenty wolves, plus the main characters. It took a long time at the beginning, but later, even sequences with a lot of wolves got through pretty quickly."

Each character presents special challenges. As clean-up animation lead Tatiana Mazzei observes, "Bill has all those straight lines. Mebh is like a little ball, and you can be more cartoony with her. Her face will deform with her expressions. But Merlyn, Robyn's falcon! Because the way his wings work as he flies, some in-betweens can be tricky."

Directors of traditionally animated films have avoided crowd scenes because so much time, effort, and money is required to draw so many figures. WolfWalkers includes not only Moll's wolf pack, but also people in the streets and markets of Kilkenny. "It's a lot of work, although not all the characters are moving all the time," says Mazzei. "You try to keep movement to a certain level that's not a crazy amount of animation. The pack of wolves was harder. They move all the time because they're animals."

"For me, this is one of the most complicated productions ever," adds Radka. "There are lots of crowd scenes: The animators have to animate the main characters, but don't have to care about the crowds. Some sequences were really, really hard."

Not every animator works with human and animal movements. Some artists create special effects: water, snow, falling leaves, smoke, and so on. WolfWalkers required a lot of effects. "I focus more on the flow of the animation and its energy," says animation FX supervisor Andreu Campos. "Cartoon Saloon uses graphic designs that can be very tricky. I can animate the designs now, but it was a challenge at the beginning of the production."

Campos cites Robyn cleaning the Lord Protector's headquarters as an example of the complexity that underlies an apparently simple scene: "When Robyn is mopping the floor, the mop is moving around and it's moving the water. That water has to match the backgrouing

also has to respond to the physical elements of the floor and react to the girl's motions with her mop. That's the work of the effects artist."

"It's especially challenging to integrate a character with water—or with any background," adds effects lead Narissa Schander. "You don't want it to look like the character's pasted on top. You need to feel like it's in its environment."

"Say a wolf has been animated swimming underwater," continues Campos. "When the wolf moves its leg, it's going to produce bubbles behind the feet—it's essentially crawling through the water. The animator has to animate those bubbles based on references and his own intuition. The physics make the animation look real, but we always break the rules a little to match the style."

Tomm and Ross wanted the effects to match the stylized designs of the film, including the visual dichotomy between Kilkenny and the forest. "They want really sharp, angular shapes for the fire, but if you look at a fire in the fireplace, it's quite curvy-looking," comments Schander. "You have to make it move the same way, but you have to stylize it and make it more angular. You might do rough animation where it's curvier, then choose where you sharpen the lines—making sure it still reads as fire."

Campos adds, "There's a moment in the movie where the forest is burning. We have two kinds of smoke: angular town-style smoke and rounded forest-style smoke. But when the location is the forest and the fire is set by the townsfolk we mix them. So it's two kinds of smoke because we are combining these different worlds in the same scene." Effects artists can study reference footage of fire, water, and other natural phenomena to understand how they move in the real world. Magic effects pose a different set of problems.

"[Co–art director] Maria Pareja did illustrations to help us with the look of the water, fire, etc. How to make something move like fire is our work," says Campos. "The problems come when the directors ask for something that breaks the rules of physics, like magic. Magic is more subjective, and more about what the director wants."

"There's no reference for magic, which makes it really fun to do," adds Schander. "You get to create your own physics and your own rules. There need to be rules about how it moves or everyone would do their own version and it wouldn't be consistent. It's very organic, since the magic comes from the wolves.

"Tomm and Ross want every frame to be worthy of printing out and hanging on the wall. Every frame has to look like a work of art," she concludes. "We get to be super expressive with the effects. We get to try different textures to get the scene to look even more amazing. You don't get to do that on just any job."

ABOVE *Effects animation of Robyn swimming underwater. Various artists.*

OPPOSITE *The magical climax of the film involved input from every department. Emmanuel Asquier-Brassart led with his integration of character and effects animation, which was plussed by other effects animators and the ink and paint and compositing departments. Concept images, using poses by Emmanuel, by Maria Pareja.*
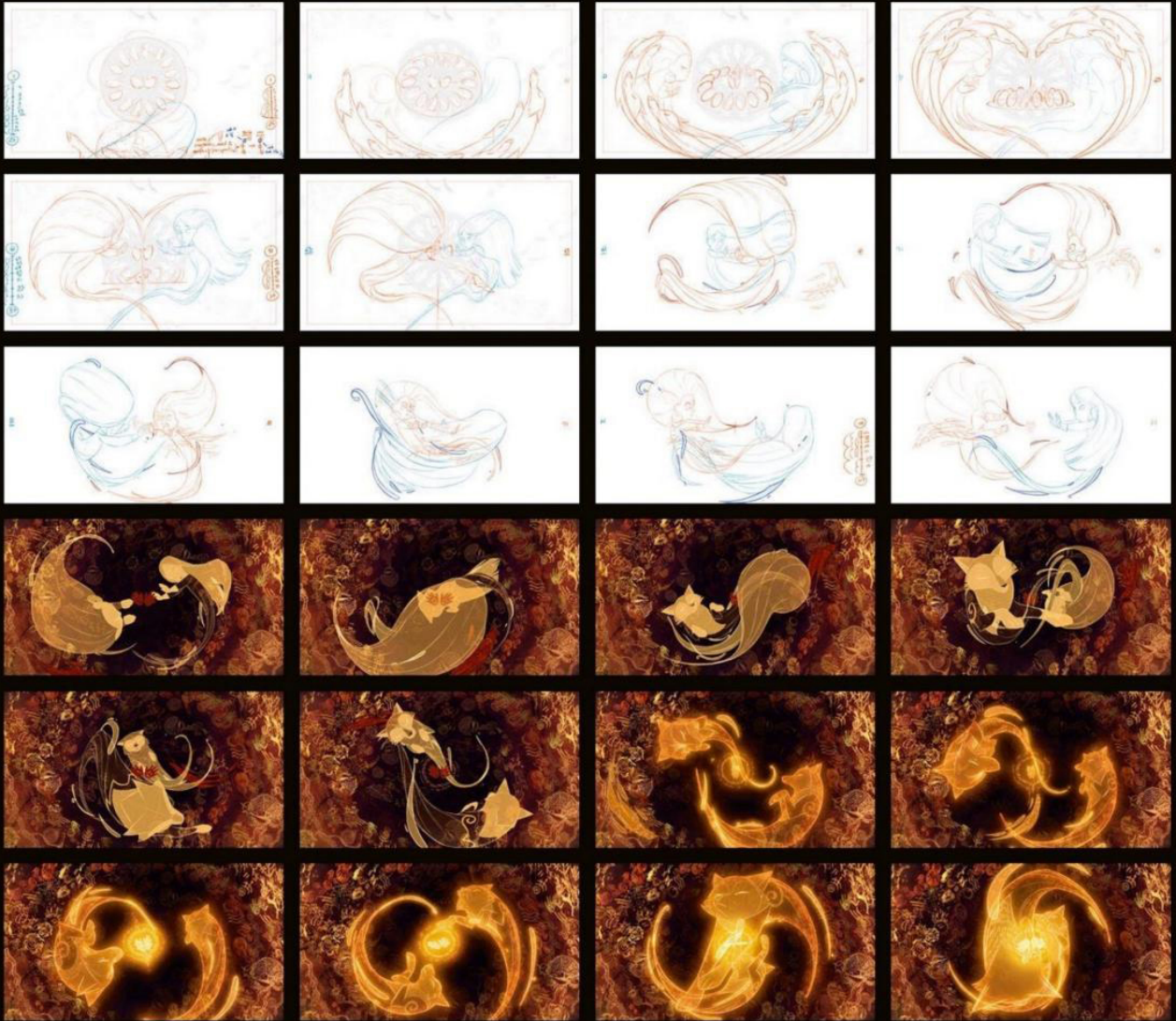
WOLFVISION

When Robyn transitions from a human girl to a Wolfwalker, Moore and Stewart felt it wasn't enough just to show changes in her appearance. To understand what she was experiencing, the audience had to see the transformation through her eyes.

"In this film, you have two worlds side by side: the world of the Puritans and the world of the wolves. The Wolfwalkers thread between them," says Eimhin McNamara, Wolfvision department head. "We wanted to show the differences in how humans perceive things versus wolves. We wanted Wolfvision to feel immersive, as if you're looking through Robyn's eyes."

A wolf's perception of the world is very different from a human's because it's built on different senses. Research indicates that a wolf's sense of smell is about one hundred times more powerful than a human's. Wolves identify pack members and potential enemies by smell; when they scent prey animals, they chase them down. Hearing is also important: Wolves can detect sounds generated six miles away in a forest, and even farther away in open country.

"We read that wolves see a more limited spectrum of colour than we do; they almost see the world in black and white," Moore explains. "We thought they would see the smells in colour with the rest of the world in black and white. If we did a pencil-charcoal render for the environments and animated them, the scents would have colour and a glow to them, so we would see how different the world appears to the girls when they become wolves.

"We worked into the plot that the wolves can tell whenever the army is marching into their part of the forest," he continues. "Robyn feels the vibrations through her paws, and she senses they have a cannon—the wolves have advantages as well. We're trying to show those advantages through this different-looking technique that's drawn on paper. We let it look as much like paper and pencil as we could."

"Wolfvision has a 3-D starting point, but everything that appears on-screen has been rendered over on paper," emphasizes assistant director Mark Mullery. "I wanted to make the film look as much like a drawing on top of a painting as possible. I didn't ever want the audience to think, 'Here comes the CG!' A pet peeve of mine is when something that looks like CG appears in a drawn movie. My taste is incredibly Puritan that way. You're trying to get a unified image."
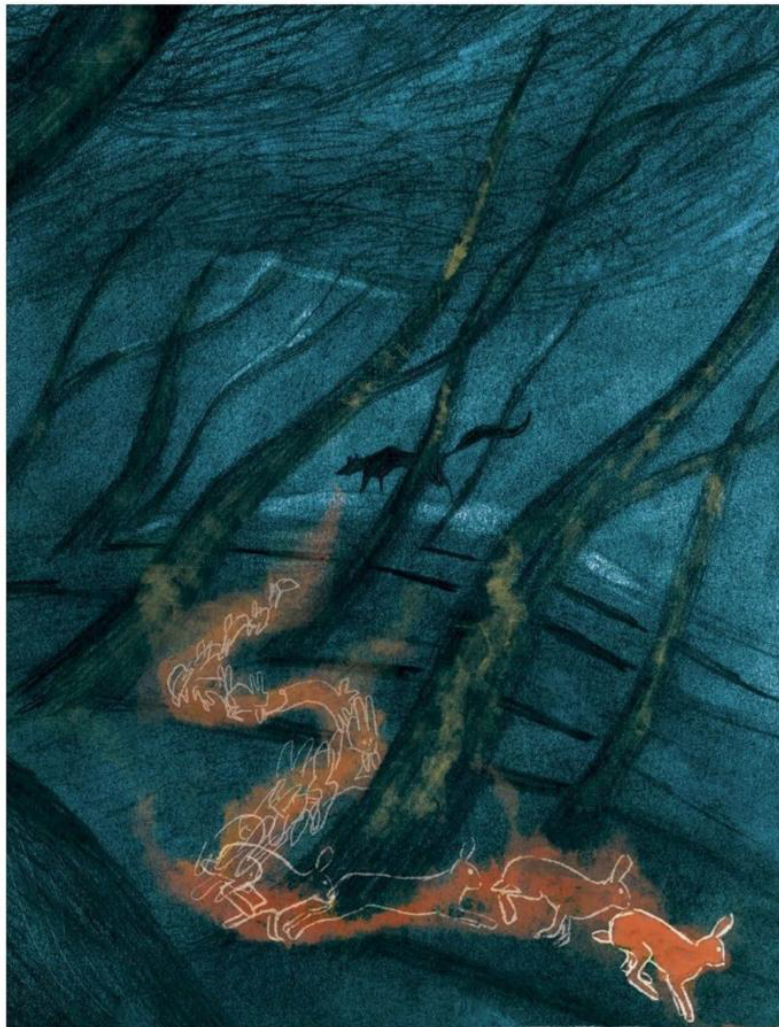
OPPOSITE *Colour and sequential images suggest how a wolf might track a rabbit by its scent. Artist: Cyril Pedrosa; character by Ross Stewart.*

ABOVE *As she is transformed into a wolf, Robyn enters a world of new sensations and perceptions. Artist: Flora Taverner.*

"We thought there should also be a three-dimensionality to this world," adds Stewart. "You're completely thrown out of the world of humans, where we play with a flattened perspective in the town. Even in the forest, the look is quite flat and pattern-y, then suddenly you're thrust into this deep, deep world where things move in true perspective. Everything is alive."

As inspiration, the Cartoon Saloon artists cite an Oscar-winning short by Richard Williams. "We wanted it to look like the animated backgrounds in *A Christmas Carol*," says Moore. "It's the most hand-drawn part of the film because it's all on paper."

But what does a scent look like? How can it be represented visually on the screen? "One reason Tomm and Ross asked me in was they weren't really sure how they wanted it to look, but they knew they wanted it to look cool," McNamara said. "Because we did a lot of R&D, it was a long development process. It was maybe six months before I had a shot.

"A lot of times the scent is used as a lure for action: Robyn or Mebh are following something or pick up someone's scent and try to figure out where it's coming from," he explains. "It's like a trail weaving through the woods or the city that the characters follow. It's a glow, and depending on its origin, it's different colours: yellow, gold, or cold colours for the urban elements and people."

The Wolfvision sequences proved technically and visually challenging. They had to stand out from the rest of the film, yet still feel like they belonged in the same world. They also had to contribute to the story.

"We wanted to make it the roller coaster in the film," Stewart concludes. "We used fly-throughs of 3-D environments, but incorporated elements of the backgrounds and hand-drawn textures. We get the effect of a light pulsing through all the background elements. When we saw it in the review room, we all said, 'That's exactly it. That will make people go, Whoa! What's this?'"
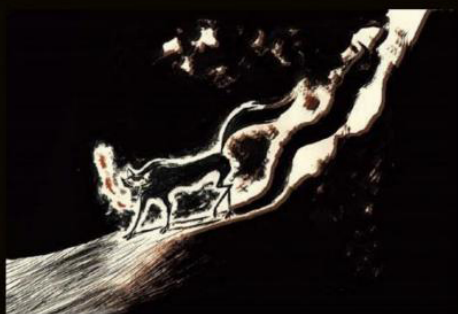
1

2

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"Wolfvision footage only makes up about three minutes, but it adds so much to Robyn's story. She couldn't go back to her normal, flat life once she's experienced the true, instinctive life of a wolf. Wolfvision is really successful at portraying that: It's a completely different world."

ROSS STEWART,
CO-DIRECTOR

Wolfvision takes the audience to a place they've never experienced: a human girl's discovery of how wolves perceive people, places, and animals.

1–2 *Artist: Cyril Pedrosa.*

3 *Artist: Flora Taverner.*

4 *Artist: Friedrich Schäper*

5 *Artist: Flora Taverner.*

FOLLOWING SPREAD *Wolfvision lead Eimhin McNamara created a previsualization camera move through the inked lines of the town of Kilkenny. The Wolfvision artists painstakingly rendered each frame with pencil and charcoal to create an immersive fly-through of Robyn's run that preserved the look of traditional media. Line layouts by Clara Avedillo; rendering by Keelan McLeod and Eimhin McNamara.*
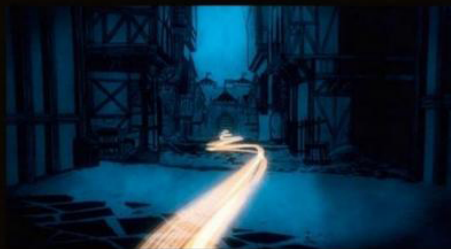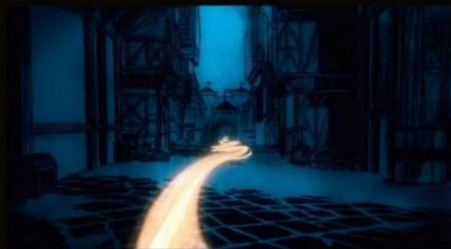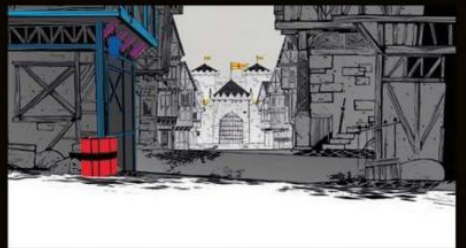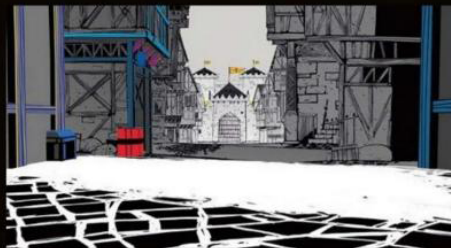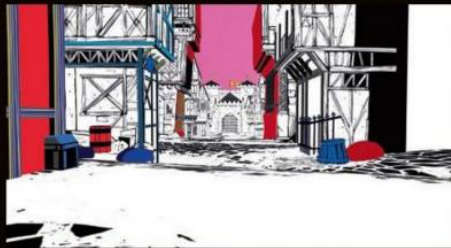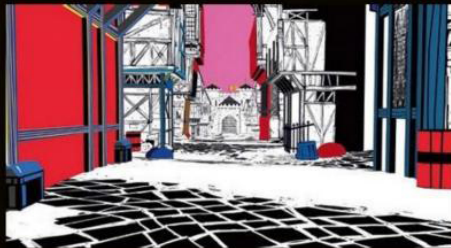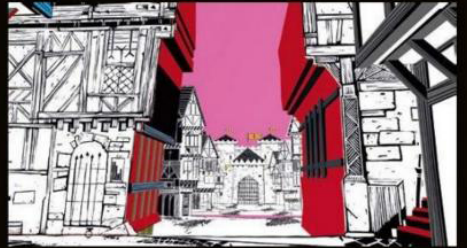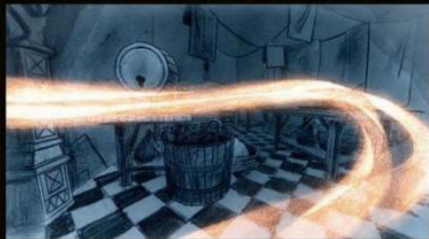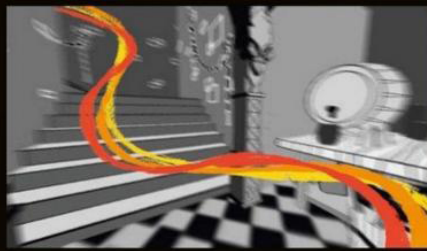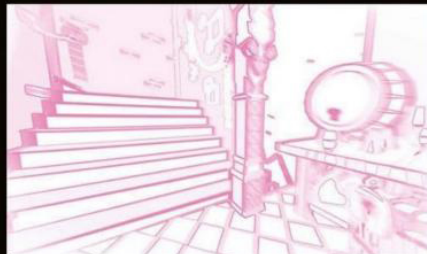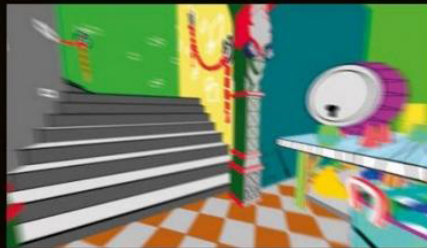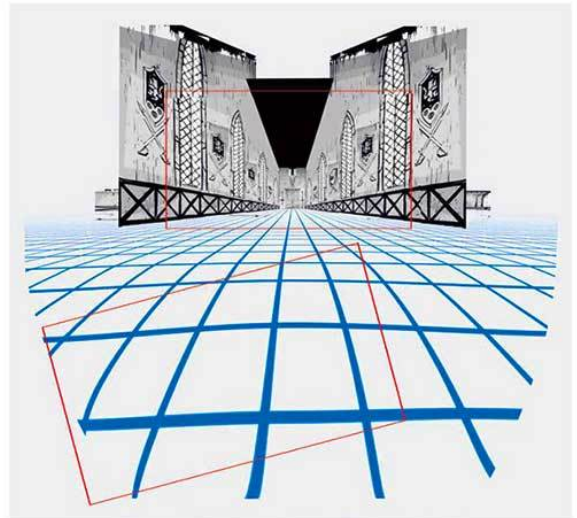
OPPOSITE *Eimhin McNamara built a CG model of the scullery, adding the trail of Moll's scent for the previsualization camera move and the final render of the scene in pencil and graphite. The scent trail was rendered on paper by FX artist Javier Gaudioso.*

1 *Gráinne Rose Fordham renders one of the pages for the Wolfvision sequence.*
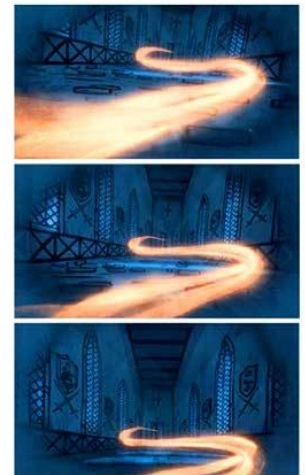
2 *A CG setup by Eimhin McNamara of the Lord Protector's headquarters. The red rectangles indicate the position of the camera.*

3 *Eimhin McNamara renders in pencil over a printout of the camera previsualization.*

4 *The composited scene with Moll's scent in gold against the blue nighttime background.*
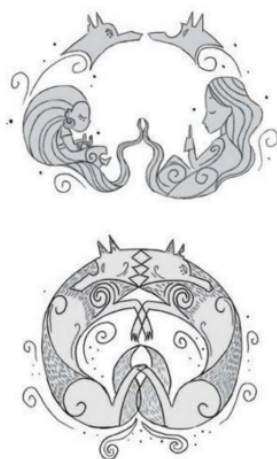
VIII. Music

Animation has been closely linked to music for more than a century. Silent cartoons had scores that were performed by theater orchestras and organists: Paul Hindemith wrote the music (now lost) for a Felix the Cat cartoon; *The Skeleton Dance* (1929), Walt Disney's first "Silly Symphony," was conceived as a graveyard romp set to Edvard Grieg's "March of the Dwarfs." To produce the artificially created sound for his Oscar-winning short, *Neighbours* (1952), Norman McLaren drew the tiny lines the exciter lamp on a projector "read"; UPA director Bobe Cannon animated to music in an effort to infuse his drawings with its rhythms.

Many memorable scenes in animated features—from Satsuki and Mei waiting for their father in *My Neighbor Totoro*, to Remy learning to manipulate Linguini like a puppet in *Ratatouille*, to Aisling bewitching Pangur Ban in *The Secret of Kells*—involve actions set to music or a song, with little or no dialogue. Some artists compare animation to ballet, as both arts involve choreographing movement through time and space to present a story.

For *The Secret of Kells* and *Song of the Sea*, Tomm Moore drew on Irish folklore and art history—and traditional Irish music. Both films included music by Kíla. Band member Colm Ó Snodaigh recalls, "Back around 1999, we played in Kilkenny, and Tomm, Ross, and Paul from Cartoon Saloon came down. They said they really liked our music, that they were working on the script for a film and that they would love for us to be involved. The script became *The Secret of Kells*."

Kells producer Didier Brunner suggested adding composer Bruno Coulais to the team. They had worked together on Danish animator Jannik Hastrup's *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Bear* (2002).

"We had imagined that we'd just work with Kíla on the music; Didier felt Kíla was great, but that we needed a composer," Moore explains. "He thought Bruno would be a good choice because he works so much with indigenous singers and traditional musicians.

Bruno came over to Kilkenny to visit the studio and met with the guys from Kíla. We took him to a pub for some traditional music, and kind of wooed him. He agreed to do it, which was great."

Over the years, the artists and musicians have developed an increasingly collaborative working relationship. Moore adds, "For *The Secret of Kells*, Bruno came in at the beginning of animation. We hadn't quite locked the animatic, so we asked him to write music for certain parts that we could animate to—especially Aisling's song and some of the action sequences. But on *Song of the Sea*, he was involved in the writing. We were going to have a flashback of the mother, but Bruno said we could get the effect by just layering her voice into the soundtrack. The process continued on *WolfWalkers* because he and Kíla get on so well: We started talking while we were writing the script.

"*WolfWalkers* was designed to be the culmination of ideas and themes we began developing in our previous films, not only visually but also musically," he continues. "The musical style of Bruno and Kíla has become synonymous with our work. Like the visuals, this score is the richest yet, with orchestra, choir, and traditional instruments all layered together. The trusting relationship we've built over the years enabled us to pull it off. We recorded the orchestra in Bulgaria again and Kíla in Grouse Lodge in Ireland, where we also recorded the voices: It was a magical and collaborative experience."

Ó Snodaigh adds, "Before the script is written, there's a meeting where we discuss the rhythms and other elements. Things can be as simple as Ross or Tomm sending a clip and saying, 'We need something here.' Bruno comes to Ireland, and we layer stuff onto the score."

"For animated movies, the process is very long, and I want to start early," Coulais comments. "I watch the animatic and start to compose little by little until the end of the movie. I write my own

orchestrations, so I need to know the colours and moods of the film. I do the orchestrations at the end of the process."

Like the visuals and the story, the music for *WolfWalkers* grew out of a collaboration that is informal, friendly, and respectful. Ross Stewart, Moore, Ó Snodaigh, and Coulais met, discussed, and made suggestions. Some ideas were immediately accepted; others required refining; inevitably, others proved dead ends. "The visual style we've developed and Bruno's signature sound and Kila's sound all feed each other," says Moore. "Even as we conceive the story, we're imagining what they'll contribute. The music is really important."

"Cartoon Saloon is an amazing place to be when we're all digging in together, and ideas are flying," replies Ó Snodaigh. "Everybody is a hundred percent open to any idea: Every idea is listened to and considered. You know when an idea works and when it doesn't. It's a really wonderful process to be involved in.

"I have to absorb an awful lot, then respond later: It seems to come out three or four days later," he explains. "I have my tape recorder and start throwing ideas on it: Some work, some don't. It's very organic, especially with Tomm and Ross. I can do something, hand it to them, and say, 'Are we on the right track?' We move on from there."

"It's very important for me to work within the chronology of the story," adds Coulais. "I send the first demo for Ross and Tomm and await their reactions. After we discuss things, the timing of the music becomes more precise.

"In an animated film, you are not in a realistic world, so the music has more importance: its placement, its structure, its timing," he continues. "You have a lot of music in an animated movie, and the music almost becomes another character. There should be an organic correspondence between the music and the film."

The artists agreed they wanted certain links between the music and the characters, but they didn't want a one-on-one correspondence, like Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. "I have some themes or short melodies: For the girl, it's a very simple motif, strange but strong," Coulais says. "For the Lord Protector, Tomm and Ross wanted to hear the double bass. We have to be very careful, so when you see a character on the screen you won't always hear the same themes or the same instruments. I don't like it when the music cleaves too closely to the story or the characters. For me, the music is a counterpoint that reveals secrets within the film."

The music for *WolfWalkers* also reflects the dichotomy between the town and the forest, as Coulais notes: "There are some contrasts between the two worlds of the film in the score: For me, the forest evokes a more mysterious, more magical realm. The city is a place of confinement, while the forest is open space."

"The intensity of the drumming in the forest was really important for me: It's not frantic, it's intense," Ó Snodaigh adds. "We tried to come up with as many different sounds as possible, sounds that are not necessarily of the time but may evoke the time. You want to

"For me, <u>WolfWalkers</u> is a film about metamorphosis. I tried to use the music to suggest this metamorphosis. The girl's transformation into a wolf was very interesting to orchestrate: It's represented by shifts in timbres, the instrumentation, and the voices. I really love this film."

BRUNO COULAIS, COMPOSER

create a feeling: It might come from the instrumentation; it might come from the melody."

Everyone agreed the score should evoke seventeenth-century Kilkenny, but it shouldn't sound like a period piece or a pastiche of Monteverdi and Cavalli. "When you are working in a certain period, you have to compose with the ears and eyes of today," says Coulais. "The story is more important than the period."

"Kilkenny doesn't have a particular style of music," Ó Snodaigh adds. "But they had cool medieval instruments in Kilkenny at the time—funky little things that were hard to play. We experimented with them, but the sound was almost too medieval: Those instruments would've distracted attention. You're trying to enhance the visuals; if you start detracting from them, it won't work."

The final score is a rich, layered work that includes the Bulgarian Symphony Orchestra and Kíla. In addition, Norwegian singer Aurora Aksnes has recorded an adaptation of her song "Running with the Wolves." Moore says, "The difference between the demo track you listen to as you animate and the final orchestration is the difference between a line test and a colour composited scene. When you work with the demo every day, it's a shock to discover how much richer the music is when it's recorded with the real instruments."

"The theme Bruno wrote for Bill and Robyn as hunters has a bit of a 'Greensleeves' feel to it. I'm not sure if it's a hundred percent historically accurate, but it feels right for the period," Moore adds. "He

brought a similar English Middle Ages kind of sound to the rest of the score. But when we were recording with the orchestra in Sofia, he would turn to me and say, 'This is the part where I want Dee [Armstrong] from Kíla to reply to the strings with her fiddle,' or 'This is where we need Colm to play the flute.' So even when he's recording the orchestra, he knows where he'll ask Kíla to add something."

Ó Snodaigh recalls, "The Grouse Lodge studio is just outside the small village of Rosemount. Not five miles from the studio stands the Hill of Uisneach: In Irish mythology it was seen as a gateway to the mythical fifth province of Ireland—*Míde*. We [Kíla] spent three days in the studio with Bruno: It felt as though we had entered a province where magic-music happens; bow and blow, pluck and strum, beat and swish, listen and play, dream and create, trust and be. It was in this enchanted province that we worked on the music for *WolfWalkers*."

Coulais sighs. "We will have multiple levels of music: the Irish band, the voices of the choir, the orchestra, some instruments I recorded myself playing in Paris, the double bass, and Aurora's song. The mixing will be very complicated, but life is like that."

Ó Snodaigh was surprised to discover he and his fellow band members made an appearance in *WolfWalkers* that was visual, rather than musical. "There's a few scenes where Tomm has painted very unflattering pictures of us," he concludes with a laugh. "We're caricatured as buskers in Kilkenny. They were looking for something comedic, and we certainly attained it."
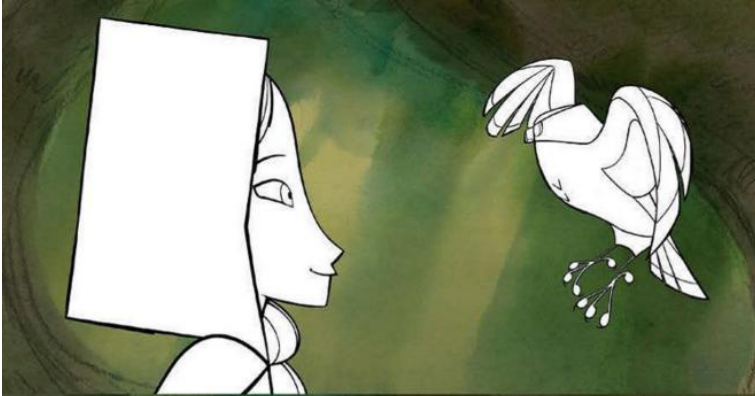
IX. Putting It Together: The Back End

"When Merlyn, Robyn's falcon, is flying, we sometimes delay the colour on the wings for a couple frames or do a couple of frames of extra colour outside the line to make it feel fluttery. We try to make it look nice and logical—not like an ugly mistake. It has to be a beautiful mistake."

HELGA BJARNA DÓTTIR,
DIGITAL INK AND
PAINT SUPERVISOR

OPPOSITE *Three versions of these scenes showcase the work of the ink and paint department. Top row: The cleaned up animation in black and white for clarity. Middle row: The same images with paint and line colour applied. Bottom row: The ink and paint artists added unique colour offsets and smears. Note the elements that suggest Merlyn's fluttering motions—and the dirt on Mebh's feet.*

The checking, ink and paint, and compositing departments make up what's often referred to as the "back end" of an animated production. Their work is technical, detailed, and demanding—but often receives little public attention. A former DreamWorks artist commented, "'Back end' isn't exactly a glamorous term—it sounds like we're working in one of those two-person horse suits from vaudeville."

His technical background made assistant director Mark Mullery the logical person to oversee much of this area. "There are certain areas I tend to review and take off Tomm's and Ross's hands, for example, ink and paint. I don't think they need to look at every single colour pop," Mullery says. "So I'll watch and refer two or three things to them. I'm scheduled to be in every review, and that sometimes means I make more reviews than Tomm or Ross. I could probably tell you how any shot in the movie was assembled, because I planned how we went about creating most of the shots."

In recent decades, computers have played an increasing role in this area of production. The artists agree computer technology has made it "easier to do hard things." Victor Paredes, an artist who uses Moho, a 2-D–rigging software, says, "We're a very small team: three people. But we're the studio's secret weapon. When they don't know how to do something in the normal way, they know we can do it."

"You can also use Moho to create a lot of different rigs and setups to do animation," he explains. "We're using it for crowd animation. I can animate crowds with a hundred or more very small characters by myself. All those characters make the town feel alive. Moho is much faster, and you get results very similar to the look of hand-drawn animation. The movie also has a lot of magic happening in the forest vegetation. We create the main movements for the individual plants, then the effects team adds elements that make it look as good as the rest of the movie."

Paredes says that when something is too expensive or boring to animate by hand, it's sent to his team. To animate the chains that fetter Moll, artists would have to draw every link and move them in ways that suggested the prisoner pulling against the weight of the iron. If the director changed the scene, every link would have to be reanimated. Victor says, "We created a rig where you just move one link and the rest of the chain follows it. If there's a retake, I'll just move the path and all the pieces will follow it."

For decades, animators drew on paper, and crews traced their drawings onto the acetate cels, which were then painted with special acrylics. The finished cels were photographed against the backgrounds. The process was labor-intensive and grew increasingly expensive. In the late eighties, Disney developed the technology to scan the animators' drawings into computer systems and colour them. *The Secret of Kells* was drawn on paper, but the Cartoon Saloon artists have switched to electronic tablets, eliminating the need for paper.

Even with the transition to digital workflow, ink and paint work is still labor-intensive and painstaking. A dozen or more colours may be applied to a single character in every one of thousands of images. There are limits to what's practical to do, whether the artists are working with computers or physical art supplies. Digital ink and paint supervisor Helga Bjarnadóttir recalls, "At the start of the project, we tested one scene several times with different numbers of coloured lines, timed everything, and showed them to

the directors. We kind of met in the middle about how many lines to colour."

Bjarnadóttir explains that her team does more than simply fill in outlines: "We're not just colouring things. In the town, we have to mimic the woodblock-print style. Colouring the forest line is easy because you can hide a lot in the 'scribbliness.'"

The digital ink and paint crew also adds details to some drawings, giving the result a richer look. "We do the dirt on the characters' feet. That was supposed to be clean-up, but they had so many things they needed to work out, I thought maybe I could solve it with a technical solution—so we could take care of it in ink and paint," she says.

"I learned TVPaint really well," she continues. "I had some time, so I went online, read all the forums, and tried things out. We have programmers in-house you can ask to build small tools. But for some things, you have to make the program work for you. So it was just sitting down and beating my head against TVPaint until I could get something that worked."

The coloured animation, effects, and backgrounds then go to compositing, where they are combined to form the final images.

"At the start of the project, we talked a lot about how the compositors would like things delivered to them, how the files should be named, what they need," Bjarnadóttir says. "We have a very close relationship: If there's an issue with something I've delivered, they can tell me and I can redeliver it. If I get a complicated scene, I may ask them how they want it done."

"Compositing creates the final image," explains department supervisor Serge Umé. "It's a really interesting job because we receive all the images from the other departments—background, special effects, ink and paint, shadows—and put them together. If the director wants something to feel sadder, we can change the colour of the background, the characters, or the effects to enhance that feeling."

Compositing may also involve adjustments to the camera angles and movements, which must be carefully planned to preserve the stylized look of the film. Umé says, "In compositing, we finalize the camera moves. The perspective is strange, because everything is flat, and the camera needs to preserve that feeling. The goal is to stay somewhere between 2-D and 3-D: Keep the 2-D but with a 3-D movement."

"On the characters, we may also add texture and work on the line," he continues. "On the characters' faces, it's important to keep the focus on the acting, so we put on less texture. We keep the faces as simple as possible so we don't disturb the amazing work they do in animation."

The power of the technology can be daunting. The filmmakers must resist the temptation to continue altering an image and make a decision, or the film may never be finished.

"It's really important to have precise art direction," Umé concludes. "All the compositing artists have a copy of the colour script. It's important to keep those ideas about colour and ambient lighting in mind. With the technology, we can change a colour. We can key a line with one colour rather than have ink and paint do it. We can manage whatever change the directors want. The only problem is time. If they want changes, it takes time. But we can do it."

ABOVE *Two stylized drawings by Salomé Hammann.*

OPPOSITE *The circle closes: Moll's spirit returns to her body, just as the spirits of man-wolves of Ossory did in the legends, hundreds of years ago. Various artists.*
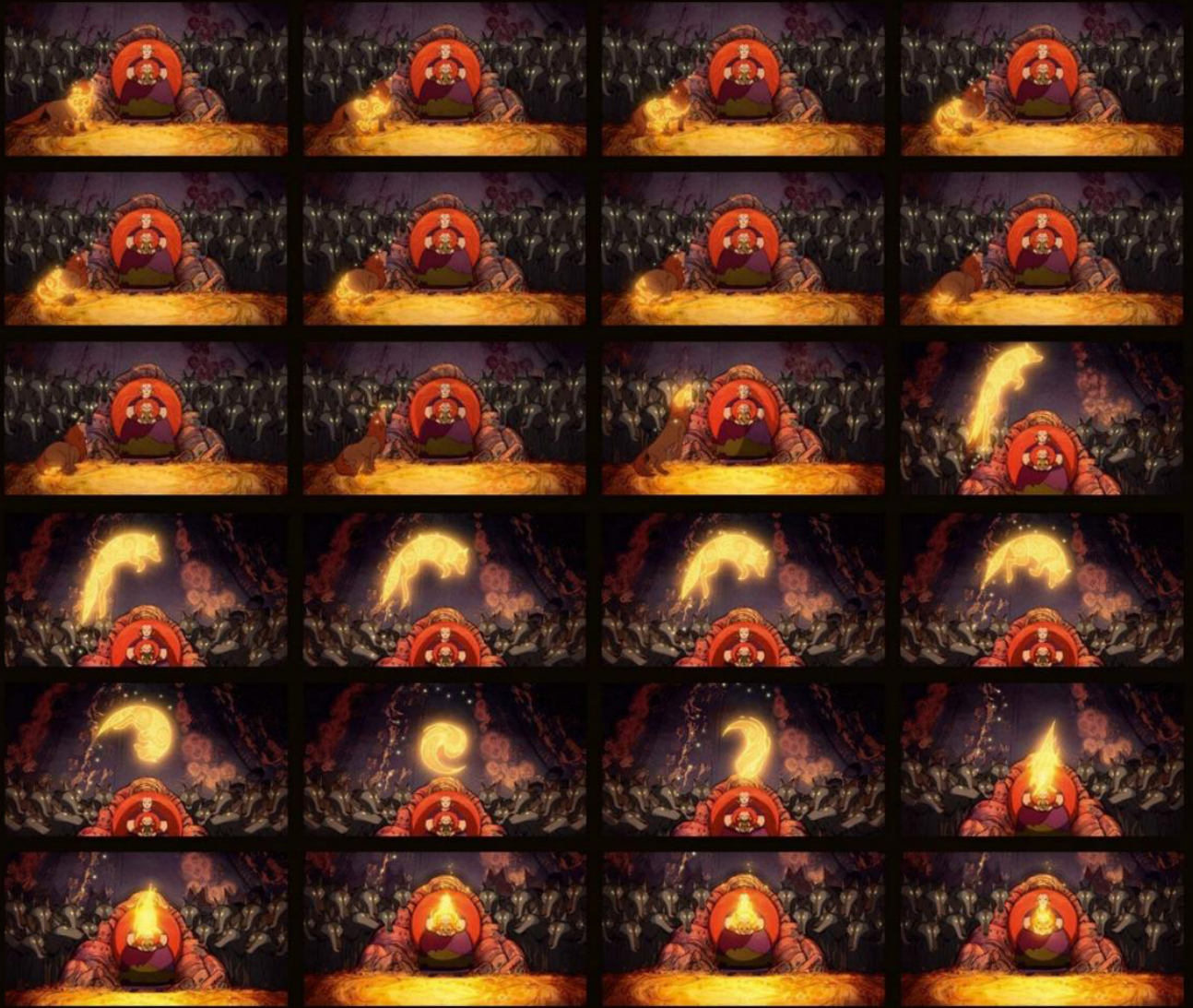
🌺 Afterword

Looking over the pages of this book, it's hard to believe the first sketches and ideas date back to 2013. I was still in the midst of making *Song of the Sea* when Ross and I dreamt up the idea over lunch.

As I drifted into middle age and grandparenthood over the course of this production, the central themes became only more urgent; hopefully we can remind our audiences of our tenuous connection to nature, and the interconnectedness of our own inner worlds and well-being with the world we live in.

The ideas, characters, and storyworld percolated and distilled over many years while we worked together with Will on the screenplay, and with so many artists on the designs, the storyboards, the animation, the backgrounds, and all the artifacts of production.

Of course the art you see here is only a tiny fraction of the mountains of work produced by the team over the course of development, pre-production, and production. Animation is as much a subtractive process of editing and selecting as it is an iterative process of refining. So many directions are tried at each stage before the final product is delivered. And of course the final film is only one of many possible outcomes that can arise from the collaborative process.

What I am happiest to see though is that the vision Ross and I had at the beginning is still there, right up until the final image. So many times I've seen animation artbooks where I felt the daring concepts and visual ideas at the beginning of development became lost as the project wound through the exhaustive process of production. Thankfully that is not so with *WolfWalkers*, and that is thanks in no small part to the crew of artists, production staff, and producers who believed in what Ross and I were trying to create.

For me, animation and, in particular, hand-drawn animation is an art form that is unique in its ability to draw on the thousands of years of visual language handed down to us from the illustrators, painters, and cartoonists of the past. We don't only have to mimic live action, but convey the emotions and inner worlds of our characters, not just with how they move, speak, and act, but also with how they and their world are drawn and painted.

I hope you can see in this artbook and in the final film our attempt at exploring those possibilities, and hopefully it will inspire other artists and animators to go even further.

TOMM MOORE

Directing *WolfWalkers* with my old friend Tomm has been a journey of ups and downs, highs and lows—from the early days of just dreaming up scenarios and outlandish possibilities with Will, the most patient and positive of screenwriters, to pulling our hair out over micro-edits before looming deadlines. Changing the gender of characters, killing and then resurrecting them, changing landscapes west to east and back again like indecisive gods; feeling like what you have at the end of day is worthy of production to starting again from scratch the next morning.

Were it not for Tomm and I being friends since we were eleven, we might have gone separate ways through production. Like an old married couple, we knew how to bury the hatchet and move on. Making *WolfWalkers* tested us all to the nth degree, but anyone who works in animation has to learn patience at twenty-four frames per second—or else consider a career in something faster.

At times when we felt tired of the project, we had to find the core element of the story that kept us going. For me, hearing Mebh's lament at what the soldiers have done to Moll stirred me, often to tears; it reminded me of why *WolfWalkers* needed to be finished.

The wolves have been extinct in Ireland for over two hundred years, and we no longer can be stirred by their haunting howls across our landscape. But maybe this story might stir that long-forgotten feeling of being wild, free, and alive, and encourage some of us to break free of whatever chains hold us in our routines. It may remind us to hold on to things that are disappearing. It might make some of us appreciate the wilder things in life, to leave them be and not try to tame and tidy every corner of the planet or our own lives. Maybe even to howl at the moon sometimes. And who knows—maybe one day wolves will howl across Irish hilltops again. . . .

A huge thanks and all credit to the beautifully talented artists and creatives of all kinds who have helped make *WolfWalkers* along the way—the movie is a sum of all parts and all arts.

ROSS STEWART

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OPPOSITE *A watercolour of Robyn and Mebh examining a medieval tapestry of a wolf hunt. Artist: Esther Brustlein.*

THIS PAGE *The Cartoon Saloon artists maintain the animation tradition of caricaturing each other as minor characters. (The toreadors in the "Silly Symphony" Ferdinand the Bull are all Disney animators, with Walt as the matador.) Artist: Federico Pirovano.*

1 *Marco Manzoni and Lamberto Anderloni.*

2 *Martin Quaden.*

3 *Maria Madelaire.*

4 *Walter Giampaglia.*

5 *Tomm Moore and his wife Liselott.*

6 *Ross Stewart.*

7 *Andrzej Radka.*

8 *Marie Post Riggelsen.*

9 *Ludo Gavillet and family.*

10 *Maria Pareja.*

11 *Federico Pirovano.*

12 *Iker Maidagan.*

13 *Adrien Calle.*

14 *Charly K. Martensson.*

15 *Svend Rothmann Bonde.*

16 *Nicole Stork.*

17 *Frank from Petronella, a restaurant named for Petronella de Meath, a maid burned as a witch in her mistress's place in fourteenth-century Kilkenny.*

18 *Ross and Asia Mularz (left) and Tomm Moore (right).*
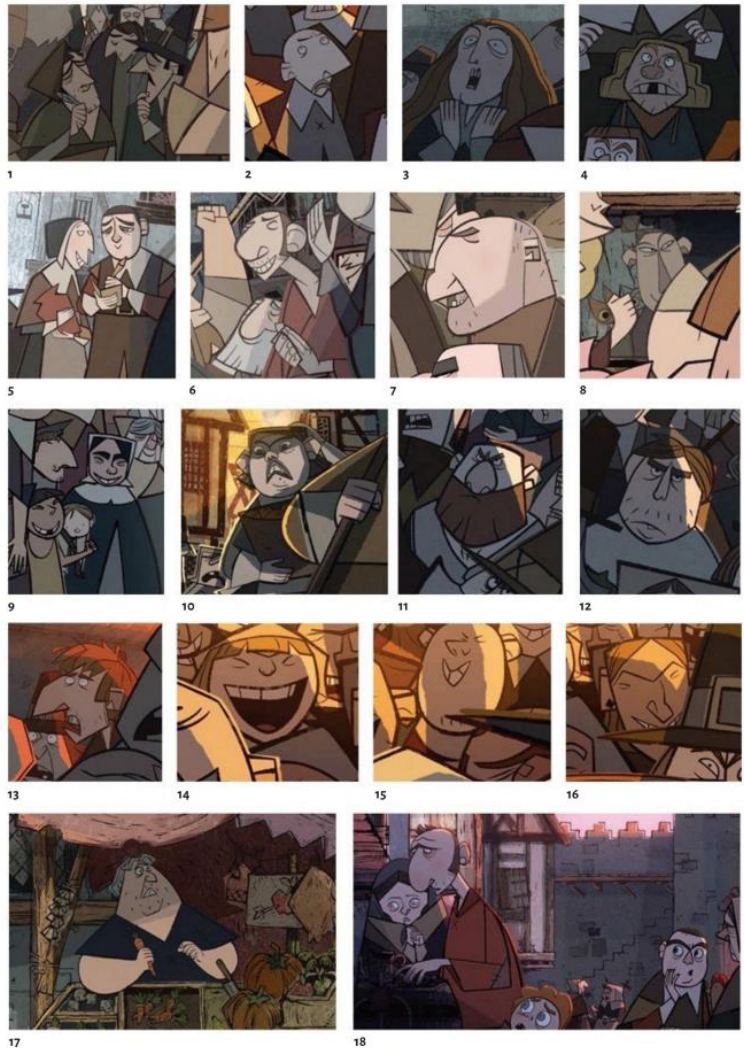
MY TIME
with the
WOLVES

by Federico Pirovano

"A savage tale of survival, sanity amongst chaos and vegan croissants in the wilderness..."

Nani?!

Omelette du fromage

Farewell to
Kilkenny

Devil Music

Wolf
Walkers
Intern

Acknowledgments

Thanks of course to Ross, who I was lucky enough to grow up with and whose talents have been a constant source of jealousy and inspiration for me since we met in school Fadó Fadó.

I would also especially like to thank a young artist from Spain, Maria Pareja, who joined us early in the production and grew to be our right-hand woman—an amazing young talent who is as speedy as she is gifted. Only a tiny amount of her work appears in this book, but she was a guiding force behind so much of it.

And thanks is also due to the talented team at Abrams who brought the flotsam and jetsam of production together so beautifully, and to Charles, who has become a friend and welcome visitor to our studio over the years—and who did such a great job of providing an engaging and entertaining overview of the process.

On a personal note, I would like to especially thank my wife, Liselott. When writing or designing a character, I often base them on someone in my life as a way to make them more authentic. It also is a trick to make living with the character day after day, for years on end, more tolerable! So Robyn is at least in part, and at least for me, very much a tribute to her huge empathy for animals and the natural world, as well as to her determined fierceness when it comes to protecting those she cares about. And finally, I would like to thank Mara, my granddaughter, who surprised and delighted us all by arriving into our lives while we were in production, and in whom I already see that fierce intelligence and love of nature that she shares with her grandmother.

TOMM MOORE

I first met Tomm Moore and Paul Young in 2009 at the Creative Talent Network in Burbank, California, when Tina Price asked me to conduct a question-and-answer session with the director of the first Irish animated feature. I watched *The Secret of Kells*, accepted eagerly, and we've been friends ever since. I met Nora Twomey not long after, then Ross Stewart.

My sincere thanks to all the artists involved in *WolfWalkers* who took time from their work on the film for interviews: Sandra Andersen, Sean Bean, Helga Bjarnadóttir, Svend Rothmann Bonde, Darragh Byrne, Andreu Campos, Richard Cody, Will Collins, Bruno

CHARLES SOLOMON

An internationally respected critic and historian of animation, **CHARLES SOLOMON** *has written for the* New York Times, Newsweek *(Japan), the* Los Angeles Times, Variety, *and National Public Radio. His books include* Tale as Old as Time: The Art and Making of Disney's Animated Classic Beauty and the Beast *(2017),* The Art of the Disney Golden Books *(2014),* The Art and Making of Peanuts Animation: Celebrating Fifty Years of Television Specials *(2012),* The Toy Story Films: An Animated Journey *(2012),* The Disney That Never Was *(1995), and* Enchanted Drawings: The History of Animation *(1989), which was a* New York Times *Notable Book of the Year and the first film book to be nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award. Solomon also teaches the history of animation at UCLA and Chapman University.*

Crioch

ABOVE *Tomm Moore offers a happy vision of the movie's
ending. (Crioch comes from the Old Irish word for "end.")*

FRONT ENDPAPERS *An intricate scene illustration conveys
the bustle of daily life in seventeenth-century Kilkenny. Artists:
Background by Clara Avedillo; characters by Federico Pirovano.*

FRONT ENDPAPERS OVERLEAF *Kilkenny Castle, occupied
by Cromwell's troops. Line by Laura Dong; colour by Stefano
Scapolan and Hortense Mariano.*

OPPOSITE *Artist: Maria Pareja.*

OVERLEAF *These watercolour sketches seem to invite the
viewer into the depths of the Irish forest. Artists: Line by Laura
Dong and Eduardo Damasceno; colour by André Odwa and
Stefano Scapolan.*

CASE *Artists: Tomm Moore, Ross Stewart, and Maria Pareja.*